

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

Neighbours.

In Three Parts.

The Eighth Edition, Corrected.

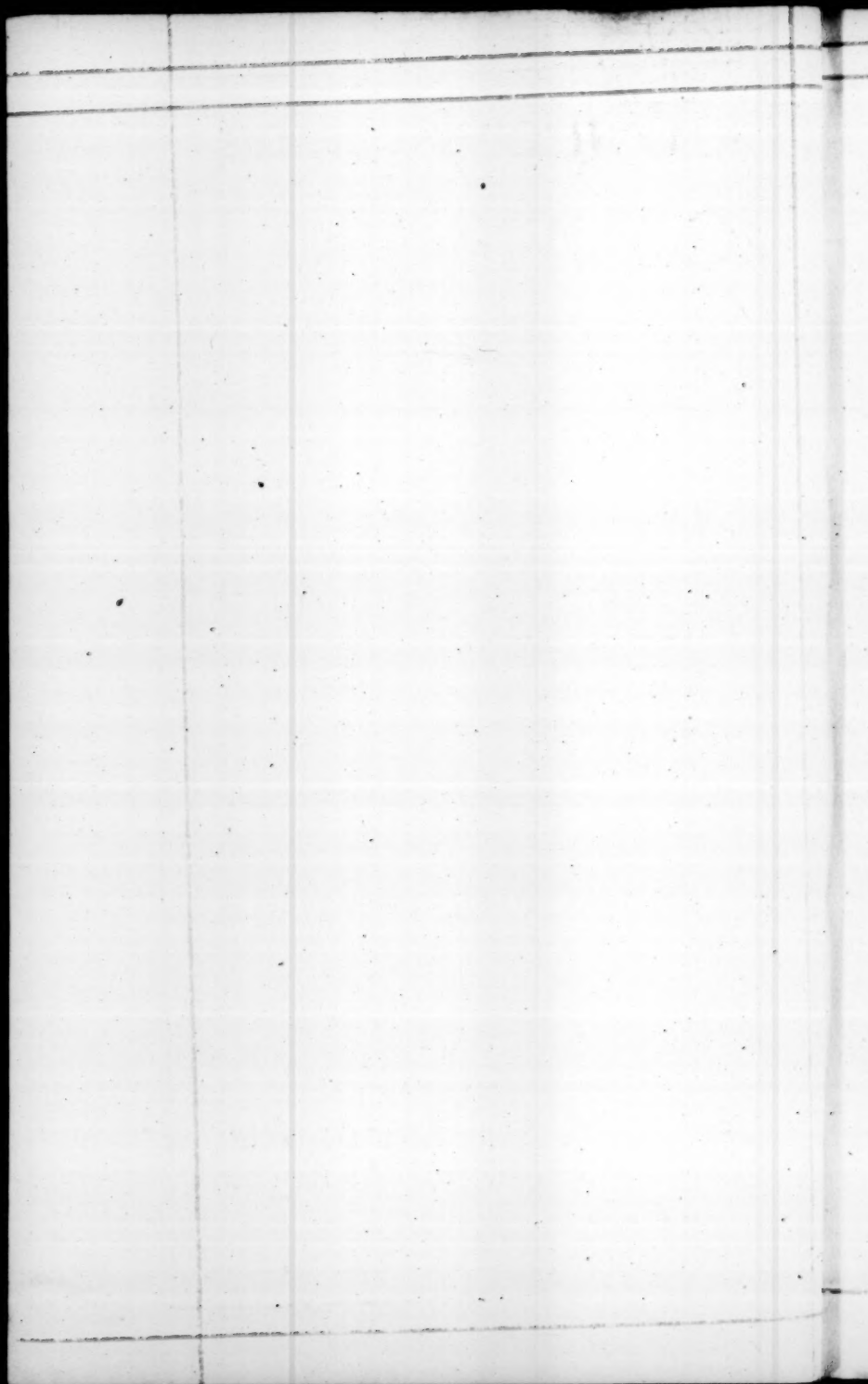
By J. GOODMAN, D. D.

Prov. xxvij. 17.

As Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the Countenance of a Man his Friend.

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. L. for Luke Meredith,
at the Star in St. Paul's Church-yard,
M DCC.



THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

Courteous Reader,

I Must on the Behalf of the Persons concern'd in these Papers now in thy Hands, bespeak thy Candor in two or three Particulars following.

First, That thou wilt not suffer thy Curiosity to carry thee so far as to be very inquisitive who they were, or where they dwelt, who held these Conferences; for besides that the Knowledge thereof would be of no Use, there are several other Reasons why I cannot gratifie thee therein, farther than by giving their true Characters, which thou wilt find subjoined.

Secondly, That whereas at the Entrance of these Conferences, and perhaps

The Publisher

also here and there in other Parts of them, thou may'st observe some short Touches of Mirth. thou wilt not be offended at them, as ill comporting either with the Gravity of the Speakers, or the Seriousness of the Design. For if thou consider the Humour of the Age, thou wilt not find thy self obliged to impute it to the Levity of Sebastian's Temper, but to his Discretion and Wisdom, that he doth accommodate himself to those he would gain upon ; as he that would catch Fish, must suit his Baits to their Gust and Fancy.

Thirdly, Because it is not unlikely but thou wilt take notice, that the Interlocutors do now and then, upon Occasion, use Complemental Attributions towards each other, and applaud one anothers Wit or Eloquence ; which being now put in Print, may, to a severe Censor, seem to savour of Ostentation, and look like clawing and flattering one another. Therefore thou art desired to remember,
that

to the Reader.

that this was done only amongst themselves, and in private Conversation ; where such kinds of Civility are usually practised, without Offence or Imputation.

As for the general Design of these Conferences, I make bold to tell thee, that it is apparently noble and generous ; namely, to lead the Way to more Manly Conversation, especially amongst the better Ranks of Men ; to demonstrate, that the strictest Vertue is consistent with the greatest Prudence and Civility ; and in short, to raise the dejected and depressed Spirit of Piety in the World. The Consideration hereof encouraged the Publication, and I hope will sufficiently recommend it to thy Acceptance.

Farewel.

The

*The Characters of the Persons in the
Two following Conferences.*

S*ebastian*, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all Advantages of engaging those he converses with, in Sobriety, and a Sense of Religion.

Philander, a Genteel and Ingenuous Person, but too much addicted to the Lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any Thing; but especially, was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and the Life to come; and therefore consequently, was much concerned for the present Life: Till at length, awakened by the discreet Reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

Eulabes, a truly Prudent and Holy Man, who made his Life a Study of, and Preparation for, Death; propounded as an Example for Imitation, in the Second Conference.

The Argument of the First Conference.

Sebastian visiting his Neighbour Philander, after a little Time spent in civil Salutations, is quickly pressed by him to the too usual Entertainment of liberal Drinking; which Sebastian at first modestly and facetiously declines; but afterwards more directly shews the Folly and Unmanliness of it. He is then invited to Gaming; which he also excusing himself from, and giving his Reasons against, Philander complains of the Difficulty of spending Time without such Diversions. Whereupon Sebastian represents to him sundry Entertainments of Time, both more delightful, and more profitable, than the fore-mentioned; amongst which, that of Friendly and Ingenuous Discourse: And from thence they are led on to debate about Religious Conference; the Usefulness, Easiness, Prudence and Gentility of which are largely demonstrated: Of which Philander being convinced, enquires the Way of entering into it, of continuing and managing of it. In which being instructed by Sebastian, he resolves to put it in practice.

The Argument of the Second Conference.

In the former Conference Sebastian having convinced Philander of the great Importance of Religion, and the Wisdom of making it as well the Subject of social Communication, as of retired Meditation; accordingly, they two meet on purpose, this Second Time, to confer about it. But Biophilus a Sceptical Person, being in their Company, he at first diverts them from their Design, by other Discourse; till, after a while, under the Disguise of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the Proof of those Principles which they would have supposed. Upon this Occasion the Foundations of Religion are searched into; and particularly, that great Point concerning a Judgment to come, is substantially proved: Which being done, and Biophilus thereby rendered somewhat more inclinable to be serious, they then pursue their first Intentions, and discourse warmly and sensibly of another World, and of the necessary Preparations for it, so long till they not only inflame their own Hearts with Devotion, but strike some Sparks of it into Biophilus also.

A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE

A T

PHILANDER'S House.

PART I.

Sebastian.

A Good Evening to you, good *Philander*, I am glad to find you in Health, and I hope all your Family is so too.

Philander. I humbly thank you, Sir, we are all well (God be praised) and the better to see you here ; for I hope you come with intentions to give us the Diversion of your good Company this long Evening.

Sebast. If that will do you any pleasure, I am at your Service. For to deal plainly, I came with the resolution to spend an hour or two with you ; provided, it be not unseasonable for your Occasions, nor intrench upon any business of your family.

B

Phil.

Phil. Business, Sir? at this time of the Year we are even weary with rest, and tired with having nothing to do.

Sebast. It is a time of leisure, I confess; the Earth rests, and so do we; yet I thank God, my time never lies upon my hands, for I can always find something or other to employ myself in. When the Fields lie dead, and admit of no Husbandry, I then can cultivate the little Garden of my one Soul; and when there is no Recreation abroad, I have a Company of honest old Fellows in Leathern Coats which find me Divertisement at home.

Phil. I know the Company you mean, though I confess I have not much acquaintance with them; but do you not find it a melancholy thing to converse with the dead?

Sebast. Why should you say they are dead? no, they are immortal, they cannot die, they are all Soul, Reason without Passion, and Eloquence without Noise or Clamor. Indeed they do not eat and drink, by which only Argument some men now-a-days prove themselves to be alive, as *Cyrus* proved the Divinity of his God *Bel*. But these are kept without cost, and yet retain the same Countenance and humour, and are always chearful and diverting. Besides, they have this peculiar Quality, that a man may have their Company, or lay them aside at pleasure without Offence. Notwithstanding, I must needs acknowledge, I prefer the Company of a good Neighbour before them; and particularly am well satisfied that I cannot spend this Evening better than in your Conversation, and I am confident I shall sleep well at night, if first some friendly Offices pass between us.

Phil.

Phil. You doubly oblige me, good *Sebastian*, first in your great condescension to make me this kind visit, and then in forsaking so good Company for mine.

Sebast. Your great Courtesie, *Philander*, interprets that to be an Obligation upon your self which is but self-love in me : for truly I am sensible that so great a part of the comfort of Life depends upon a man's good Correspondence with those that are near about him, that I think I cannot love my self unless I love my Neighbour also. And now, Sir, if you please, let us upon this occasion improve our Neighbourhood to a more intimate Friendship, so that you and I who have hitherto lived peaceably and inoffensively by each other, may henceforth become mutually useful and serviceable to one another.

Phil. O good *Sebastian*, you talk of self-love, but I shall be so far from it, that I must hate my self, and that deservedly too, if I lay not hold of so advantageous a proposal.

Sebast. Dear Neighbour, no Complements, I beseech you, that will spoil our design, and continue us Strangers to each other.

Phil. If I were used to complement, yet I should be ashamed to make so superficial a return to an overture of so much kindness and reality ; but I am plain and hearty, and heartily I embrace both your self and your motion.

Maid, make us a good Fire.

Come, Sir, what will you drink ?

Sebast. All in good time, Sir.

Phil. Nay never in better time ; now is the season of drinking ; we must imitate the Plants, and now suck in sap to serve us all the Year

after : if you will flourish in the Spring, you must take in good Juices in the Winter.

Sebast. You seem, *Philander*, to dream of a dry Summer, however I'll pledge you, for I am sure the Winter is Cold.

Phil. Well, Sir, here is that will abate the edge of the Weather, be it as sharp as it can. This drink will make the Evenings warm, and the Nights short in spite of the Season.

Sebast. That would be a pleasant Experiment, but have you tried it?

Phil. Yes very often, *probatum est* ; but then you must take the full dose. Come, fear it not, this will breed good blood, cure Melancholy, and is the only Cement of good Neighbourhood.

The rippling Humour of the Age exposed.

Sebast. Why then I hope our Friendship will be lasting, for the Cement (as you call it) is strong.

Phil. You are pleasant, *Sebastian* : but now that you and I are together ; and under the Rose too (as they say) why should not we drink somewhat briskly ! we shall know one another and love one another the better ever after. For, let me tell you, this will open our Hearts, and turn our very insides outward:

Sebast. That Trick, *Philander*, I confess I have seen plaid, but I thought it a very unseemly one.

Phil. I doubt you mistake me, I mean only that a liberal Glass will take off all reservedness in our Conversation.

Sebast. I understand you, good Neighbour, but with your Pardon I must needs tell you, that I have never been able to observe the Glass you speak of to be so exact a mirror of Minds, but

but as often to disfigure and disguise Men, as truly to represent them. Have you not found some Men, who upon an infusion in strong Liquor, have seemed for the present to be totally dissolved into kindness and good Nature; and yet as soon as ever the drink is squeezed out of these Sponges, they become again as dry, as hard, and as rough as a Pumice, and as intractable as ever. Others you shall observe to hector and swagger in their drink, as if they were of the highest Mettle and most redoubted Courage, whose Spirits nevertheless evaporating with their Wine, they prove as tame errand Cowards as any are in Nature. Perhaps also you may have taken notice of a maudlin kind of Soakers, who commonly relent when they are well moistened, as if they shrunk in the wetting; and will at such times seem to be very Devout and Religious, and yet for all this they continue as sottish as ever, as impenitent as a weeping Wall, and as insensible as the groaning plank. Contrariwise there are some men, who in the general habit of their Lives, appear to be very discreet and ingenuous persons; yet if, contrary to their Custom they have the misfortune to be surprized with drink, they become as dull as Dormice, as flat and insipid as Pumpkins.

I cannot think therefore that this Drink Ordeal is so infallible a test of Mens Tempers as you imagine; or if it were, yet there is no need of it between you and me: we can candidly and sincerely lay open our Bosoms to each other, without having a confession of our Sentiments forced from us, by this new fashioned Dutch Torture.

Phil. I must needs confess, *Sebastian*, that you

raille at Tipling with so good a Grace, that I cannot be sorry I gave you the occasion : but still I doubt you mistake me, I am not for scandalous and debauched Drinking, but in a civil way between Friends, to make our Spirits light, and our Hearts chearful.

Sebast. And, good *Philander*, do not mistake me, I am not of that morose Humour to condemn all Chearfulness ; neither do I take upon me to prescribe to every man his just Dose, or think a man must divide by an hair, or be intemperate. I account good Wine as necessary as good Meat, and in some Cases more necessary : Neither do I doubt but a Man may make use of it with a good deal of prudent Liberty ; for I do not look upon the Fruit of the Vine, as the forbidden Fruit, or think so hardly of God Almighty, as if he gave us so good a Creature only to tempt and insnare us. Yet on the other side, I am perswaded, that a man may love his House, though he doth not ride upon the ridge of it ; and can by no means be of their Opinion, who fantasie there is no Freedom but in a Debauch, no Sincerity without a Surfeit, or no Chearfulness whilst Men are in their right Wits. And I look upon the very conceit of this as reproachful both to God and Man, but the Practice of it I am sure is the bane of all manly Conversation.

Phil. I have known some Men oppose one Vice with another as bad or worse ; and who whilst they railed at drinking, have, in effect, only made Apologies for ill Nature : but you, *Sebastian*, though you speak some very severe Things, yet attempter them with so much Humanity, that I feel a kind of Pleasure, even then when you touch me to the quick ; therefore you
that

that have so much good Nature your self, will, I presume, make some allowances to Complaisance in others.

Sebast. Far be it from me to undervalue good Nature, which I have in so great esteem, that I scarcely think any thing is good without it; It is the very air of a good mind, the sign of a large and generous Soul, and the peculiar Soil on which Vertue prospers. And as for that genuine Fruit of it

*Of good Nature
and Complaisance.*

Complaisance, I take it (if it be rightly understood) to be that which above all things renders a man both amiable and useful in the World, and which as well sweetens as facilitates Conversation; but the mischief is (as it generally happens to all excellent things) there is a Counterfeit which (assuming the name) passes current for it in the World, by which Men become impotent and incapable of withstanding any Importunities, be they never so unreasonable, or resisting any Temptations be they never so dangerous; but as if they were crippled in their Powers, or crazed in their Minds, are wholly governed by Example, and sneakingly conform themselves to other Mens Humours and Vices; and, in a word, become every Man's Fool that hath the confidence to impose upon them. Now this is so far from that lovely masculine Temper of true Complaisance, that it is indeed no better than a childish Bashfulness, a feeble Pusillanimity, and silly softness of Mind, which makes a Man first the Slave and Property, and then at last the Scorn of his Company. Wherefore it is the part of a Good-natur'd Man, neither so rigidly to insist upon the punctilio's of his Liberty or property, as to refuse a Glass re-

commended to him by civility ; nor yet on the other side, to be either Hectored or Wheedled out of his Christian Name (as we say) and Sheepishly submit himself to be taxed in his Drink, or other indifferent things at other Mens Pleasure. And if he shall fall into the Company of those, who shall assume to themselves such an Arbitrary power, as to assess him at their own rate, and prescribe their measures to him: I do not doubt but that with a *Salvo* both to good Nature and Civility, he may and ought so far to assert his own Dominion over himself, as with a generous disdain to reject the Imposition, and look upon the Imposers as equally tyrannical, and impertinent with those who would prescribe to me to eat their proportions of Meat, or to wear my Cloaths just of their size.

Phil. O Sir, your discourse is brave and wise and virtuous, but one thing is wanting to make me your Profelyte ; which is, that I doubt it is not practicable ; you cannot certainly but be sensible how difficult a thing it is for Modesty and good nature to oppose the prevailing Humour of the Age, which in plain truth is such that now-a-days a man looks very oddly that keeps any strict measures of drinking.

Sebast. I am afraid it is too true which you say ; and though I have no mind to reproach, or much less quarrel with the Age we live in ; yet I confess to you, it is a matter of regret and disdain to me to observe Skill in good Liquors ambitiously pretended to, as if it were a very considerable Point of Knowledge : and good Drinking looked upon as so important an affair of humane Life, that that time seems to be lost, in which the Glass goes not round, and the Cup
and

and the Bottle seem to be the Hour-glass or the only measure of Time. And this I the more wonder at, because the Air, the Climate, the Constitutions of Mens Bodies, are not changed, and the Laws of Temperance are the same they were wont to be: and besides all this, I do ingenuously acknowledge the Age to be Extraordinarily polite and ingenuous; I would therefore very fain know, but have not hitherto been able to satisfy my self, from what causes this change of Mens Manners in this particular hath arisen, and what hath brought this Tipling Humour into Fashion.

Apologies for Tipling baffled.

Phil. You need not ask my Opinion, for you have answered your self; it is a Fashion, and that you know is changeable without observable causes; but because, perhaps you think my unhappy experience may enable me to say something in the Case, I will tell you: Fashions, you know, are commonly taken up for distinction-sake; for Men do not love to appear in the Garb of those whom they hate or despise. Now there are a melancholy sort of people amongst us, that are wonderfully precise in their way; Men of a kind of Lessian Conscience, that pretend to do all things by measure, and indeed weigh every thing by scruples, and consequently (whatever they are towards themselves) are very severe in their censures, of other Men, insomuch, that whatsoever is not just after their Mode and Humour, especially if it look never so little airy and light, they presently damn it as flat immorality and debauchery. These Men (however some of them may be well-meaning and pitiable)

pitiable) you will easily grant must needs be very troublesome in the World. But then there is another sort of Men, who being of a more sanguine and chearfull Temper, are not so Strait laced in their Principles, and consequently are apt to indulge themselves a far greater Liberty of Conversation ; and in detestation of the former whom they observe to be often absurd and unreasonable, but always hide-bound and phantastical, do (as it is too usual in such cases) run out upon some extremity on the other side ; and so, in short, it seems to me that unnecessary scrupulosity hath given occasion and countenance to its direct contrary ; and thus that Tipling humour, as you call it, hath become the prevailing fashion.

Sebast. In truth, *Philander*, the account you have given is ingenious, and not improbable : But, Lord, what a misery is it that men must always be upon extremes ! is there no middle ? cannot Men be merry and wise too ? is there any necessity that every Man must be intoxicated one way or other ? if one sort be silly, must the other be mad ? or if they be mad, must these be drunk ! For my part, I cannot tell whether to call this distinction (as you do) or Imitation, or Infection, or Fascination, or what you will, but sure I am, they are both very vitious and absurd.

Phil. Nay, *Sebastian*, I will not take upon me altogether to justify the Practice of the one more than the other ; but now I am in, I will (with your leave) give you notice of another thing, that is thought to have a considerable stroke in this business, and may in some measure mitigate your censure of the Good-Fellows.

It

It is the Observation of Wise men, that generally the customs of People were taken up at first upon the Account of some natural necessity or defect (as we see generally Art supplies and perfects Nature.) Now you know we live in a cold Climate, and consequently must needs have dull flegmatick Bodies, the influence of which upon our Minds is easily discernable (amongst other instances) by that extream Modesty and Bashfulness, which is almost equally common to us all, and peculiar to all that are of this Country, and which ordinarily Tongue-ties us in all good Company, untill Wine have warmed us, and dissolved that ligament; so that it should seem that Drinking is not altogether blame-worthy, as being more necessary to us than to most other People, if it were but to make us sprightly and conversable: for as on the one side, you cannot expect that all men should be able to converse together like a Company of dry philosophers; so on the other, I know you would not have Englishmen, when they are in Company, hold a silent Quakerly Meeting.

Sebast. Now, *Philander*, you have mended the matter finely, to avoid my censure of the Good-Fellows (as you call them) you have censured the whole Nation as a Generation of dull Sotts: and represented your Countrymen as a sort of People newly fashioned out of Clay, and, just able to stand upright, but into whom God Almighty hath put no Soul at all, but left that to be extracted out of the Spirit of Wine, by which means, when we have attained it (and not till then, it seems) we may become like other Folks. But in the mean time, I wonder what became of all our sober Ancestors, and particularly

larly of the dry Race of *Queen-Elizabeth-men* (as they are called) I cannot find but they had as much Soul and Spirit as the present Generation (however they came by it,) though they never made Alembicks of themselves. But in earnest *Philander*, I will confess ingenuously to you, that as for such a dull sort of earthly Men as you speak of, I should not much be offended with them, if they now and then got a little Froth into their Heads, to supply their defect of Brains; and if upon that occasion they grew somewhat conceited and impertinent, the matter were not much, though the Metamorphosis might seem strange, for a dull Ass to become an Ape or a Monkey: but then for the same reason the finer Wits (and surely some such there be) should let it alone; for that rational and ingenuous Men should by this Cup of *Circe*, the magical Power of Wine, be transformed into such kind of Animals, methinks it is a thousand pities. But why do you smile, *Philander*?

Phil. Even at my self, good *Sebastian*, or at least at that Picture you have drawn for me; it would look a little ambitiously, if I should compare my self to the Land of *Egypt*, which they say, was fruitful in proportion to its being over-flown; but in plain truth, I am such a spot of Earth, as will bear nothing unless it be well watered; and to countenance my self in this condition, though I cannot pretend to Learning, yet I remember I have heard that the gravest Philosophers did use to water their Plants (as we say) and sometimes philosophized over a Glass of Wine.

Sebast. And why not over a glass of Wine, as well as by a fire side? provided a Man take care,

care, that as by the one he does not burn his Shins, so by the other he doth not overheat his Head; or to follow your Metaphor, provided a man only water the Soil, and do not drown it. You know it is only extreams that I find fault with, when men will be always sipping and dabling, as if their Bodies were nothing but Pipes made on purpose to transmit Liquors through; or as if they had their Life and Soul transus'd into them from the Hogshhead.

Phil. Well, Sir, I perceive I am likely to get nothing by my fine figure; I will therefore say no more of my self; but I have heard some others say they have always found their reason to be strongest, when their Spirits were most exalted.

Sebast. But sure they did not mean that their Reason was strongest, when the Wine was too strong for them? if they did, then either their Reason was very small at the best, and nothing so strong as their Drink, or else we are quite mistaken in the names of things; and so in plain English, Drunkenness is Sobriety, and Sobriety Drunkenness: For who can imagine that that which Clouds the Head, should enlighten the Mind; and that which wildly agitates the Spirits, should strengthen the Understanding; or that a coherent thred of Discourse, should be spun by a shattered vertiginous brain. It is possible some odd Crotchets and Whimseys may at such times be raised together with the Fumes; or it is not unlikely, but that a man may then seem wondrous wise in his own Eyes, when he shall appear very silly and ridiculous to all others that are not in the same condition with himself; but to go about to make any thing
better

better of it, is a kind of liquid Enthusiasm. And that this is no wild conjecture or uncharitable Opinion of mine, I appeal to this Experiment; tell me, good *Philander*, what is the Reason that Men in those Jolities (we speak of) cannot endure the company of those that will not take their share with them, but are most pleased with such as will rather exceed their measure, and take off their Cups, roundly; is it think you out of desire that such Men should be wiser than themselves, or the quite contrary? or what is the Reason that Men of this Practice are very shy of those Persons that will remember and repeat afterwards the Passages in those merry assignations? I make no doubt, but when you have considered the Case, you will find this to lie at the bottom, namely, that even such Persons are sensible that several things pass amongst them at such times for wit and good Humour, which when they hear of again, and reflect upon in their sober intervals, they are heartily ashamed of, as apish and ridiculous Fooleries.

But now, if (after all) I should grant you (which I do not unwillingly) that Men well whetted with Wine (as they love to speak) are very sharp and piquant, very jocular and ready at a repartee, or such like; yet besides that this edge is so thin and Razor-like, that it will serve to no manly purposes; yet it is also very dangerous, since at that time a wise Man hath it not in keeping.

Phil. Well, I perceive hitherto the edge of my Arguments turns at the force of your Replies; therefore I had best contend no longer with you on that point, whether Wine raises Mens parts

or

or no: But one thing I have yet to say, which I am sure you must and will grant me, viz. that it suppresses Cares and Melancholy, and makes a Man forget his Sorrows, (that great Disease of Humane Life) and this I suppose sufficiently commends the liberal use of it.

Sebast. That which you now say is undeniably true; and no question, for this very end was the juice of the Grape principally ordained by the great Creator of the World; but yet I know not how it comes to pass, that this remedy is seldomest made use of, by those to whom it was peculiarly prescribed; I mean the melancholy and dejected have ordinarily the least share of it; but it is very commonly taken by the prosperous, the sanguine, and debonair, and such as have least need of it; and these frequently take it in such large proportions, that it makes them not only forget their Sorrows (if they had any) but themselves and their business too. So that upon the whole matter, I see no tolerable account can be given of the way of drinking now in fashion; for it appears to have been taken up upon no necessity; it is recommended by no real advantage, either to the body or Mind, and therefore must owe its rise to no better causes than dullness or idleness, a silly obsequiousness to other Mens humours, or Epicurism and Wantonness of our own Inclination. And for the Habit of it, it is no better than a lewd Artifice to avoid thinking, a way for a Man to get shut of himself and of all sober Considerations.

It fills Men with more Spirits than it leaves them able to Govern; from whence they become
great

*The real causes of
Tipling intimated,
and the mischiefs
of it exaggerated.*

great Talkers, proud boasters, capricious, insolent and quarrellsome. For it so much dilates and rarefies the Spirits, that they cannot bear up a weighty thought; and while such as those are sunk and drowned, nothing but the mere froth and folly of Mens Hearts bubbles up in their Conversation. And this insensibly growing upon men, by degrees introduces an habitual vanity and impertinence, below the gravity and dignity of humane Nature: and by means of which, such men become fit only for Toys and Trifles, for apish Tricks and buffoonly Discourse; which in conclusion do so far degrade a man below his quality, that he becomes not only a shame to himself and his Family, but the contempt of his very Servants and Dependents.

And touching this last, have you not sometime observed, what dry Bobs; and sarcastical Jeers the most underling Fellows will now and then bestow upon their Betters, when they have found them faltering in this kind: *Was not Master such a one cruelly cut last night?* says one. *How like a drowned Rat was Master such a one?* says another. *How wisely our Master looks when he has got his dose?* saith a third.

Shall I need after all this, to represent the Sin committed against God Almighty, by this vain Custom, in the breach of his Laws, deforming his Image and quenching his Spirit; or the injury it doth to humane Society, in the riotous and profuse expence of so comfortable a Cordial and support of humane Life; or, shall I but reckon up the mischiefs a man hereby incurs to his own person, the danger of his Health, the damage to his Fortunes, the ———

Phil. O, no more, no more, good *Sebastian*; I am yours; you have silenc'd, you have vanquish'd me; I am not able to resist the evidence of truth in your Discourse, you have quite marr'd a Good-Fellow, and spoil'd my Drinking.

But how then shall I treat you? Come, you are for serious Things, what say you to a Game at Tables? Methinks that is both a grave and a pleasant entertainment of the time.

Sebast. Truly, Sir, I am so unskilful at that and most other Games, that I should rather give you trouble than diversion at it. But what need you be solicitous for my Entertainment; It is your Company

Of Gaming, and particularly of Chance Games.

only which I desire. And methinks it looks as if Friends were weary one of the other, when they fall to Gaming.

Phil. But I should think a Man of your temper might have a fancy for this Game, as upon other respects, so especially because it seems to be a pretty emblem of the World.

Sebast. As how, I pray you, Sir?

Phil. Why, in the first place, the casual agitation of the Dice in the Box, which unaccountably produceth such or such a Lot, seems to me to represent the disposal of that invisible Hand which orders the Fortunes of Men. And then the dexterous management of that Lot or Cast by the Gamester, plainly resembles the use and efficacy of humane prudence and industry in the Conduct of a Man's own Fortunes.

Sebast. I perceive, *Philander*, that you play like a Philosopher, as well as a Gamester; but, in my opinion, you have forgotten the main re-

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semblance

semblance of all, which is, That the Clatter and Noise in tossing and tumbling the Dice and Table-men up and down, backward and forward, lively describes the hurry and tumult of this World, where one Man goes up, and another tumbles down; one is dignified and preferred, another is degraded; that Man reigns and triumphs, this Man frets and vexes; the one laughs, the other repines; and all the rest tug and scuffle to make their advantage of one another. Let this, if you please, be added to the Moral of your Game. But when all is done, I must tell you, for my part, I am not so much taken with the Original, as to be fond of the Type or Effigies; I mean, I am not so in love with the World, as to take any great delight in seeing it brought upon the Stage, and acted over again: But had much rather retreat from it, when I can, and give my self the contentment of repose, and quiet thoughts.

Phil. However, I hope you are not offended at my mention of that Game. Do you think it unlawful to use such Diversion?

Sebast. No, dear *Phil.* I am not of that austere Humour, to forbid delightful Exercises; for I am sensible, that whilst Men dwell in Bodies, it is fit they not only keep them up in necessary reparation by meat and drink, but also make them as lightsom and chearful as they can, otherwise the Mind will have but an uncomfortable Tenancy. The Animal Life, I say, must be considered as well as the Intellectual, and our Spirits have need to be relaxed sometimes, lest the keeping them continually intent weaken and infeeble them so, that they cannot serve us in greater purposes; I would therefore as soon

soon universally forbid all Physick, as all kinds of Exercise and Diversion, and indeed rather of the two, for I think the latter may in a great measure save the trouble of the former, but that will do little or no good without this.

Neither do I think even those Games of Chance absolutely unlawful ; I have sometimes made use of this in particular which you mention, or the like to it, upon some occasions : As for instance, when I took Physick, and could neither be allowed to walk abroad, nor to be serious and thoughtful within doors ; I have supplied both, for that time, with a Game at Tables. Or, it may be, when I have happened to be engaged in some kind of Company, I have play'd not so much to divert my self with the Game, as to divert the Company from something that was worse. But to deal freely with you : Though I do not altogether condemn, yet I cannot very much commend these kind of Sports ; for indeed, I scarce think them Sports, they are rather a Counterfeit kind of Business, and wearies one's head as much as real Study and Business of importance. So that in the use of them a man only puts a cheat upon himself, and tickles himself to death ; for by applying himself for delight to these busie and thoughtful Games, he becomes like a Candle lighted at both ends, and must needs be quickly wasted away between jest and earnest, whenas both his Cares and his Delights prey upon him.

Besides, I observe, that Diversions of this nature having so much of Chance and Surprize in them, do generally too much raise the passions of men, which it were fitter by all Arts and Endeavours to charm down and suppress. For, to

say nothing of the usual accidents of common Gaming-Houses, which (as I have heard from those that knew too well) are the most lively Pictures of Hell upon Earth, and where it is ordinary for Men to rave, swear, curse and blaspheme, as if the Devil was indeed amongst them, or the Men were transform'd into Infernal Spirits; I have seen sad Examples of Extravagance in the more modest and private, but over-eager pursuits of these Recreations: inso-much that sometimes a well-temper'd person hath quite lost all command of himself at them. So that you might see his Eyes fiery, his Colour inflamed, his Hands to tremble, his Breath to be short, his Accents of Speech fierce and violent; by all which and abundance more ill-favour'd Symptoms, you might conclude his Heart to be hot, and his Thoughts solicitous, and indeed the whole Man, Body and Soul, to be in an Agony. Now will you call this a Recreation, or a Rack and Torture rather? A Rack certainly; which makes a Man betray those Follies which every wise Man seeks to conceal, and heightens those Passions which every good Man endeavours to subdue.

And, which is yet worse (as I was saying) this course looks like the accustoming of the Beast to be rampant, and to run without the Rein. For by indulging our Passions in jest, we get an habit of them in earnest, and accordingly shall find our selves to be enclined to be wrathful, peevish and clamorous, when we apply our selves to business, or more grave conversation.

To all which add, That Gaming (and especially at such Games as we are speaking of) doth insensibly steal away too much of our time from

from better business, and tempts us to be Prodigals and Bankrupts of that which no good Fortune can ever redeem or repair. And this is so notoriously true, that there is hardly any Man who sets himself down to these Pastimes (as they are called) that can break off and recall himself when he designed so to do. Forasmuch as either by the too great intention of his Mind, he forgets himself; or the anger stirred up by his misfortunes, and the indignation to go off baffled, suffers him not to think of any thing but revenge, and reparation of his Losses, or the hopes he is fed withal trowls him on, or some witchery or other transports him so besides his first resolutions, that Business, Health, Family, Friends, and even the Worship of God it self, are all superseded and neglected for the sake of this paltry Game.

All which consider'd, I am really afraid there is more of the Devil in it than we are ordinarily aware of, and that it is a temptation of his to engage us in that, where he that wins most is sure to lose that which is infinitely of more value. Therefore upon the whole matter, I think it much safer to keep out of the Lists, than to engage; where, besides the greatness of the stake, a Man cannot bring himself off again without so great difficulty.

Pardon me, dear *Philander*, if my zeal or indignation (or what you will call it) hath transported me in this particular; sure I am, I have no intention to reproach your practice, nor to affront you for your motioning this sport to me, but speak out of hearty good-will, and to give you caution.

Phil. O *Sebastian* ! I love you dearly, and thank you heartily for the freedom you have used with me. We good-natur'd Men (as the World flatters us, and we love to be stiled) considering little or nothing our selves, and having seldom the happiness of discreet and faithful Friends that will have so much concern for us as to admonish us of our imprudences and our dangers, as if we were meer Machines, move just as other Men move and prompt us, and so Drink, Play, and do a thousand Follies for Companies sake, and under the countenance of one another's Example : God forgive me, I have too often been an instance of that which you now intimated : I therefore again and again thank you for your advice, and hope I shall remember as long as I live what you have said on this occasion.

But that you may work a perfect Cure upon me, I will be so true to my self as to acquaint you faithfully with what I apprehend to be the Cause of this Epidemical Distemper. I find the

*Want of Business
the Occasion of Drinking
and Gaming.*

common and most irresistible Temptation both to Drinking and Gaming, is, the unskillfulness of such Men as my self to employ our time without such kind of Diversions, especially at this Season of the Year, when the dark and long Evenings, foul Ways and sharp Weather, drive us into Clubs and Combinations. If therefore you will deal freely and friendly with me herein, and by your prudence help me over this difficulty, you will exceedingly oblige me, and do an act worthy of your self, and of that kindness which brought you hither.

Sebast.

Sebast. There is nothing, dear *Phil.* within my power which you may not command me in. Nor is there any thing wherein I had rather serve you (if I could) than in a business of this nature. But all I can do, and as I think all that is needful in this case, is, to desire you to consider on it again, and then I hope you will find the difficulty not so insuperable as you imagine. It is very true, Idleness is more painful than hard Labour, and nothing is more wearisome than having nothing to do : Besides, as a rich Soil will be sure to bring forth Weeds, if it be not sowed with more profitable Seed ; so the active Spirits in Man will be sure to prompt him to evil, if they be not employed in doing good. For the Mind can no more bear a perfect cessation and intermission, than the World a *Vacuum*.

But this difficulty which you represent, generally presses Young Men only : These indeed having more Sail than Ballast ; I mean, having a mighty Vigour, and abundance of Spirits, but not their Minds furnished with a sufficient stock of Knowledge and Experience to govern and employ those active Spirits upon : no wonder if such persons, rather than do just nothing, and in defect of real Business, do greedily catch at those shadows and resemblances of it, (as I remember you ingeniously call'd Drinking and Gaming. Besides, these sort of Persons seeming to themselves to have a great deal of time before them, are easily drawn to spend it the more lavishly, as out of an unmeasurable Store. But what's all this to Men that are entred into real business, and have concerns under their hand, and the luxuriancy of whose Spirits is taken off by Cares and Experience, and especially who

cannot (without unpardonable stupidity) but be sensible how daily the Time and Age of Man wears away. Now, I say, why Time should be so burthensome to such as these, or what should betray them to such infrugal Expences of it, I profess, for my part, I can give no Account, without making severe Reflections on their Discretion.

Phil. Assign what causes of it you can, or make what reflections upon it you please, however the matter of fact is certainly true in the general, That a Gentleman's Time is his burthen, whether he be young or old) and the want of Employment for it, his great temptation to several Extravagancies.

Sebast. I must believe it to be as you say, because you know the world better than I do, and I am confident you will not misreport it. But really, *Phil.* it is very strange it should be so; and I am sure cannot be verified without very ingrateful returns to the Divine Bounty, which hath made so liberal and ample provisions for the delight and contentment of such persons far above the rate of others. It is true, they have less bodily labour, and no drudgery, to exhaust their Time and Spirits upon, (and that methinks should be no grievance) but then the prudent management of a plentiful Fortune (if things be rightly considered) doth not take up much less time than the poor Mans labour for necessities of Life. For what with securing the Patrimony, and Husbanding the Revenue, what with letting and setting his Lands, and building and repairing his Houses, what with planting Walks, and beautifying

fyng his Gardens, what with accommodating himself according to his Quality, and hospitably treating his Friends and Neighbours according to theirs; and, to say no more, what with keeping Accounts of all this, and governing a numerous and well-fed Family, I am of opinion, that (all this taken together) the Gentleman hath indeed the more pleasant, but a no less busie employment of his time than other Men: Insomuch that I cannot but suspect that he must be deficient in some principal branch of good-husbandry, and defrauds his business that surfeits on leisure.

Moreover, as Divine Bounty hath exempted such Men as we speak of from the common sweat and anxieties of Life, by those large Patrimonies his Providence and the care of Parents hath provided to their hands; so the same Divine Majesty hath thereby obliged them, and it is accordingly expected from them by the World, that they be more publickly serviceable to their Prince and Country, in Magistracy, in making Peace, and several ways assisting Government, and promoting the ends of humane Society: upon which account, as it is very unjust that others should envy and malign them for their enjoyments, so it is apparent also, that they are so far from having less to do than their Inferiours, that, on the contrary, the Gentleman's Life seems to be far the busier of the two.

Besides all this, Gentlemen having usually more ingenuous Education, and consequently are presumed to have more exercised and improved Minds, may therefore be able to employ themselves, if all other business ceased, and fill up the vacant spaces of their time with
such

such delightful and profitable Entertainment as others are incapable of.

Phil. That, Sir, that last Point is the thing I would fain learn, namely, how to fill up the vacant spaces of Life (as you call it) so as to leave no room for temptation to Debauchery.

Sebast. I am heartily glad to see you of that mind ; but I assure my self there is nothing I can say to it, but what your own discretion will prevent me in. However, if it be your desire that I should enlighten your thoughts by opening of my own, we will then, if you please, examine this matter between us,

An estimate or account of the Time and Business of Man's Life.

and by that time we have compared the Period of our Lives with the variety of Business that occurs in it, I am out of all doubt that you will be then thoroughly satisfied that we have neither so much Time as to be a burthen to us, nor if it were more than it is, should we be at a loss for the bestowing of it. And this, without resorting to any of the Extravagancies aforementioned.

Let us then, in the first place, suppose that the Lives of Men at this Age of the World, and particularly in this Climate and Country, amount commonly to seventy years ; for though it is possible here and there one out-lives that term, yet it is pretty evident, by the most probable Calculations, that there is not above one Man in thirty, or thereabouts, that arrives at that Age : However, I say, let us at present suppose that to be the common Standard.

Now to discover what an inconsiderable duration this is, let us but ask the opinion of those that have arrived at it, and they will assuredly tell

tell us, that all that whole term when it is past seems to be a very short stage, and quickly run over ; or if we had rather trust to our own experience, let us look back upon twenty or thirty years of our own lives, which though it bear a very great proportion towards the Lease of our whole Lives, yet when it is over, seems to be but a little while to us, and that Time, as it is usually pictur'd, fled upon Wings —

Phil. I pray pardon me, if I a little interrupt the thred of your Discourse ; you may easily continue it again, and for failing, I will remember where you left off. That which I would say by the way is this ; I can verifie the truth of what you were supposing, by my own experience, and have often wondred what should be the reason of it, that Men have quite different apprehensions of time past, and time to come. When we look back (as you well observe) upon twenty or thirty years which are gone, they seem but a trice to us ; but if we look forward, and forethink of so many years to come, we are apt to fanisie we have an Ocean before us, and such a vast prospect that we can see no end of it. Now I ask your Opinion, what it is that puts such a fallacy upon us ? for other it cannot be ; forasmuch as the same term of years, whether it be reckoned forward or backward, past or to come, must needs really be of the same length and duration.

Sebast. It is verily so as you say, and the Observation is very ingenious and pertinent to the business in hand. But to give you an account of the reason of that different estimate, I can say but these two things, *viz.* Either as it is in
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the nature of hope, to flatter us, so all things seem bigger at a distance ; and whilst they are in expectation only, than what we can find them to be in fruition. Or else it must be, that what is past of our Lives we have fresh and lively remarks upon, by remembring the notable passages that have fallen out within that compass, by which means those equally remote portions of time are brought nearer to our eye.

But, on the contrary, in the time which is to come, we can have no remarks upon it ; because not knowing what shall happen, we have nothing to fix our Thoughts upon, and so it looks like a vast Ocean to us. For you know that things which are in confusion seem to be more than the same things when they are digested into just order and method. And in travelling, you observe that twenty or thirty miles which we are well acquainted with, and have frequently traced, seems short and inconsiderable ; but the same length of Journey in an unknown Way seems very tedious and formidable to us. Thus I think it is in the Case you have propounded ; but now, if you please, let us pass on where we were going.

I say then, Suppose the term of our lives be estimated at the duration of about seventy years,

A Practical Demonstration of the littleness of our spare-time.

yet in the first place we must subduct from this Summ a very considerable part as taken up in Childhood and Youth, and which slips away we know not how, so as to escape our observation, being wholly spent in folly and impertinency, but certainly lost to all manly purposes : to which if you add the infirmities of Old Age, (which though

though it do not equally in all Men, yet) always more or less renders some part of our time useless; you will think it no unreasonable *Postulatum* if I suppose that both together take up a third part of the whole.

Then, in the next place, let us consider how great a proportion is taken up in sleep, in eating and drinking, in dressing and undressing, in trimming and adorning, and, to be short, in the meer necessity of the Body. I have read of a brave *Saxon* Prince of this our Native Country, who allowed only eight hours in the Day, or one third part of his time, to these uses; but I doubt few mean Men follow his Example: and if we take measures from common experience, we shall find that these meaner offices take up near, if not altogether, half the time of most persons. And so another third of the whole is gone, and only one poor third remaining for all other occasions.

Then again, out of that remainder, a very great share will be challenged by necessary Business, the Affairs of our Estate or Calling, and the Concerns of our Families; and these occasions are so importunate, that they will not be denied without culpable ill Husbandry, nor gratified without a large proportion of the aforesaid remainder.

Moreover, whether we will or no, another part will be ravish'd from us by Sicknes and Physick, in Civility and Complement, in Visiting and being visited, in Journies and News, and a thousand Impertinencies; so that he must be a very good and wary Husband indeed that suffers not great Expences this way.

And after all this, here is nothing for reading

ing and Study, for Meditation, and the Improvements of our own Minds ; nay, not for Religion and Devotion towards God, and the unspeakable concerns of another World, which in all reason may most justly put in for their shares.

Phil. All this is very true ; but what do you infer from this Account ?

Sebast. I dare trust your Judgment to make Inferences from the Premises : For, in the first place, I know you cannot fail to observe, and that with a just indignation, that the lightest matters of our life have the greatest share of our time spent in them : Folly and Infirmary, Infancy and Dotage, take up the greatest room of all : then worldly Business and Pleasure exhaust the most of that which is left, and the Mind and noblest Interests have least of all left for them.

And then, secondly, you cannot but note with admiration how very little share God Almighty hath even from the very best of Men. And you cannot but adore his Goodness, which rewards with Eternal Life that little time in which Men work in his Vineyard ; for whether Men come in at the Eleventh Hour or sooner, it is too plain that scarcely an Eleventh part of our time is spent in his Service. But that which I aim at in this Calculation, is, to demonstrate to you that there is a great deal more reason that Men should endeavour rather to redeem Time from lesser Occasions, than to lavish it in Impertinencies, that so our weightier Concerns may have the more tolerable allowances : And to be sure he must be a very soft and feeble Man, that after all these ends are

are served, can complain that Time lies upon his hands, which was the thing to be proved.

Phil. I am now amazed at my own stupidity, that could think fit to put such a case to you. Lord! what vain Fools are we, that complain of plenty, when we are rather straitened and in want? What silly Prodigals are we that are so far from sparing betimes; that we are not so much as frugal, when all these claims and demands come in so thick upon us? I have often heard it said, that by keeping a strict account of Incomes and Expences, a Man might easily preserve an Estate from dilapidation; but now I perceive, that for the want of a little of your Arithmetick *to number our days*, we run out our Lease of Life before we are aware; and fancying we have enough to squander away upon every trifle, we have ordinarily little or nothing left to defray the most weighty occasions.

And, with your pardon, let me tell you, I think now I have found where the Shooe pinches: It is not (I perceive now) a surplussage of Time that tempts us to seek out those Diversions aforesaid; but the meer vanity of our Mind, which hath a fondness for them: and then Custom and Example have made them so natural and almost necessary to us, that we think the time long till we are at them. Not that we have much to spare, for, God knows, we have little enough, but because we think much of all that which is otherwise employed. And this, I doubt, is the true reason why we are impatient of long Prayers, and offended with a long Sermon; which whoso observes, would perhaps charitably suppose

pose, that the urgency of Business would not permit us to attend them ; but we utterly deprive our selves of that pretence, when we complain that time lies upon our hands. To speak truth therefore, and shame the Devil and our selves too, we can hardly spare time for God, because we love him too little : but we have abundance of spare time for our idle Diversions, only because we love them too much.

Sebast. Dear *Phil.* you have hit the very Mark : but let us go on, and suppose that our spare time were more than it is, or possibly can be (upon the Premises) yet it will be no hard matter to find out more pleasant, as well as more innocent, Entertainments of it, than those now in request.

For, in the first place, there are some Employments every whit as delightful as Recreations themselves ; such as, in particular, Planting and Gardening, in which a Man may not only have the pleasure to contemplate the admirable beauty and variety of the works of God, but by improving the nature of Plants, by altering the species, by mixture and composition of several beauties and perfections into one, by deducing one out of another, exalting one by another, and, in a word, by giving being and continuance to several things, he becomes a kind of Creator himself, if I may without offence use such an expression. This kind of business ministers so many and so ravishing Delights, that I remember *Cato* preferred it before all the Pleasure of Youth, and thought the entertainment of his elder Years herein a good exchange for the voluptuousness of younger Years, which he had

now

now lost all use and apprehension of. Nay, I think *Epicurus* himself placed a good part of his Felicity in the delights of his Garden. And, above all, I am certain that God Almighty, who knew best what Satisfaction were to be found within the whole Sphere of his Creation, and was not invidious or niggardly towards Men, made choice of this for the entertainment of our first Parents in their state of Innocency, and before their Folly and Sin had damned them to Care and Toil, and to the Sweat of their Brows.

Again, there are some Exercises and Recreations both of Body and Mind, which are very ingenuous, as well as divertive; such as Singing, Musick, Painting, and the like; in which a Man rather puts a pleasant Deception upon himself in point of Time, than wholly loses it. And they are so far from debauching his Mind, or raising his Passions, that they only exalt a Man's fancy, but otherwise compose his Temper even to admiration.

And if you will promise not to laugh at my Peculiar Humour, I will refer another Instance to this Head, and tell you, That methinks the playing with a pretty humour'd Child of three or four Years Old, or more or less, is scarcely inferiour in delightfulness to any of the former; where you shall observe Innocency of Mind, Benignity of Temper, sweet and gentle Passions, easie and unforced Mirth, unfeigned Love, pretty Endearments of Affection, pleasant Endeavours to speak and express it self, little Dawnings of Reason and Fancy, and innumerable other things, which a man can feel rather than express. I called this my peculiar Fancy, but I do not know why it should be peculiar to me;

I suppose it may be more general: However, I confess to you I am much the better pleased with it, because I find in the Gospel that our Saviour himself was not displeased with it.

Besides all these there are some Offices of Humanity and Charity which afford a man unspeakable delight in the discharge of them: Such as comforting a Friend or Neighbour in his affliction, or assisting and counselling him in his difficulties; promoting Peace and making an end of Controversies; relieving a poor Man in his hunger, &c. In all which, besides the Satisfaction a Man hath in his own mind, upon consideration that he hath done well and worthily, he is also sensible of a re-action, and as it were by Reflection, participates of the pleasure those Persons find by his good Offices towards them: For, to say nothing of any of the other, what a refreshment is it to our own Bowels, to observe the Appetite and Gusto with which a poor hungry Man feeds upon that which you charitably supply him with? And it will do a Man's heart good to take notice of the strange change wrought in such a Person by a bountiful entertainment; his countenance more chearful, his spirits brisk, his heart light, his whole temper more sweet and ingenuous. All which who can be accessary to without a kind of vertuous Epicurism?

All these which I have named are sincere and manly pleasures, without noise and without danger; which neither raise a Mans passions, nor drown his reason: They are neither so fine and spiritual, that the Body can have no participation of them; nor so gross and feculent, that the mind should be ashamed of them. And in some

some or other of these every Man that pleases may spend his vacant hours with satisfaction.

But let me now go a little higher; and what if we take in somewhat of the other World to sweeten the present Life? What think you, after all, of Prayer to God, and Reading the Scripture? may not a Man bestow some of his time in these with as much pleasure as devotion, and so (to allude to Modern Philosophy) fill up the void Spaces of his Life with Celestial Matter.

*Of Prayer, and
Reading the Scri-
ptures.*

As for the former of them, Prayer, I remember you well observed, that several of those Men that complain as if they were over-burthen'd with time, yet love to make as short work with this as they can; wherein they betray either some measure of Atheism in their hearts or a great deal of sensuality in their affections: And I cannot tell whether they more contradict themselves, or discover their shamefull ignorance of the noblest pleasures of Life. For besides that it is highly agreeable to the best reason of a Man's mind, that he should do all honour to the Divine Majesty, and daily pay his homage to his greatest Benefactor; and nothing, sure, can be more delightful, than the exercise of our highest Powers about their proper Object. And besides that Prayer is the known way to obtain the divine Blessing, upon which all the pleasure and comfort of our Lives depend, and never fails of Success one way or other.

Besides all this, I say, and abundance of other advantages of it, it is the very pulse of the Soul, which keeps the Spirits florid and vital; it answers to the Motion of the Lungs in

the Body, and exhales those melancholy Vapours that would choak and suffocate our Hearts: By it we put our selves under the Divine Protection, and our Spirits are heightened and fortified by the Patronage of so high a *Genius*, who can secure us against all Assaults and Dangers whatsoever. When we have commended our selves to the Divine Providence by Prayer, our Hearts are at rest; we are secure sleeping and waking; we are never alone, but have always one to second us; whatever the issue and Success of our endeavours be, our Minds are quieted; if Things answer our Wishes, we have a double Satisfaction, that God Almighty favours us, as well as that our Labours are successful: if things miscarry, we impute no Folly nor Omision to our selves, we have done all that was fit for us to do, but it pleased Divine Wisdom to disappoint us. Besides the frequent Approach of the Divine Majesty puts a Gravity upon a Man's Countenance, checks and keeps down all Exorbitancy of Passions, begets an Ingenuous Modesty, and makes Men as well ashamed as afraid to do an unworthy Action.

To all which add, That by the Advantage of our Prayers we are enabled to become a publick Blessing, and every private Man a Benefactor to the whole World; than which thing, what can be either greater in it self, or more acceptable to a great and generous Mind? Consequently, what can a brave and publick-spirited Man employ his Time in with more delight, than in that which (whatsoever his Fortunes and external Condition be) will make him a Blessing, not only to his Friends and Neighbourhood, but to the Country and Times

he

he lives in; that even Kings and Princes are really beholden to him? Nor is it necessary that much Time be taken up herein, to serve all these great Ends; nor much less is it my Intention to commend affectedly long Prayers: A little Time, and a great deal of Heartiness best doth the Business of Religion; and that little so employed, will make all the rest pass away the more sweetly and comfortably.

And then for Reading and Meditating upon the Holy Scripture, the Psalmist hath told us, that the good and blessed Man's *delight is in the Law of God, and that therein he meditates day and night*: And surely any Man may be able to entertain a few Moments in it. If curiosity sway with us, there are as admirable things in the Holy Scriptures as the Mind of Man can desire. If we affect History, we have there the ancientest and most faithful Monuments in the World; those, without which all Mankind had continued in their Nonage and Childhood to this day, as being so far from able to give an account of the beginning of the World, and Original of Things, that they could not have looked backward many Ages, but they would have been utterly bewildered in Mists and Fables as absurd as the wildest Fictions of Poets. Besides, without this Record, all the wonderful Methods of Divine Providence (which are the Assurance and Comfort of the present Age, and the obligation to Vertue and Foundation of Piety and Religion) had been buried in Oblivion.

If we seek after Knowledge, either Natural, Moral, or Prudential, where is there such another Treasury of it to be found as this, where we have not only the Relations and Observations

of the wisest Men in all Ages past, but the discoveries of the Divine Majesty, the depths of infinite Wisdom (that know the true Reason of things) laid open.

If we are pleased with the foreknowledge of things to come, (as what Man of Soul can chuse but desire to see beyond the Curtain) then all the Presages, Prognosticks and Divinations, all the most rational Inductions of the wisest Men, are but silly surmises and idle dreams to the Predictions of the Holy Prophets, which give us light to the World's end and a view of another World: and have both assured their own credit, and warranted our belief of what is yet to come, by the well known accomplishment of their former Predictions.

If we would improve our selves in Vertue, what surer Rule can we have than the express Declarations of God himself? Who can prescribe to him what shall please him, or prescribe to us better than he that made us, and knows what is fit for us to do? And what more full, plain, compendious and higher Institution of Religion can there be than the Holy Scripture?

This brings God near to us, and us near to him; here you know his mind, you see his nature, and hear him speak; here you may stand as it were upon an *Isthmus* or Promontory, and take a view of both Worlds; this is the Light of our Eyes, the Rule of our Faith, the Law of our Conscience, and the Foundation of all our Hopes. All this together, sure, cannot chuse but make the reading of the Scripture become a very serious, and yet a very delightful Employment. And now, upon the whole matter, what think you, dear *Phil.* May not a Gentleman

man entertain himself, and his time without the relief of Drinking and Gaming?

Phil. What think I, say you? Why, I think worse of my self than ever I did. I do not wonder now at what you said when we first came together, *viz.* That you could always find employment for your Time; but I wonder at my own folly: for I plainly see now, that no Man can have Time to be a burthen upon him that hath come honestly by it; I mean, that hath not stolen it from nobler Entertainments, to bestow it upon a Debauch.

Sebast. But yet this is not all neither. I perceive I have satisfied you, both of the pleasantness of some lighter, but Innocent Exercises, which I named in the first place; and also of the great importance of Prayer, and Reading the Scripture, which I last spoke of: Yet, as on the one hand, I would not have a Man employ all his vacant hours on the former; so neither on the other hand, do I think he is bound to exhaust them wholly upon the latter. No, *Phil.* our Bodies are compounded of various humours, our Souls consist of several faculties; God is a good and benign Being, and consults the good and comfort of all the Powers he hath created. Besides all

the fore-mentioned, therefore, (and those which I have supposed, without naming them particularly) there is a way

Of Study and Meditation; the advantages and the difficulties of it.

of enteraining our selves, called Study and Meditation. Study, I say, in general; not confined to any Subject, but only directed to the general end of improving our selves, and the time God hath given us in the World.

For why should we abject our selves that have rational Souls, an active, vigorous, intellectual Spirit in us? is not this able to employ it self, our Time, and our bodily Spirits too? Is not our Mind large enough to embrace the whole World? Can we not bring upon the Theatre of our Imagination all the Occurrences of Time past, as well as present? Must we needs only pore upon the things just before our Eyes? must our Understandings lie fallow and barren, unless they be continually stirred up by our Senses? Are our Souls only given us for Salt to keep the Body sweet, or fervilely to cater for our inferior Powers; and not rather to subdue and govern them?

Why should not we remember we are Men and improve our best Talent, sharpen the Sense of our Minds, and enlarge and greaten our Spirits? what hinders but that a Man may converse with himself, and never have better company than when he is most solitary? How can a Man want Company, that hath an Angelical Nature within him; or need Diversion, that hath the whole World before him to contemplate?

What should discourage or hinder men from this Course? Is it the pains and difficulty? Nothing in the World is pleasanter when a Man is once used to it. Is it for fear we should exhaust our selves, and, like the Spider spin out our own Bowels in our Web? There can be no danger of that, an immortal Soul never wears out; and if the Body goes by the worst, so long as the Spirit is bettered, there is no loss in all this. Or say it should be to no great fruit that we apply our selves to Study, yet, at least, this is gotten by it. That we employ our Time, and keep our selves out of Harms; which is as much as we now seek for.

Phil. It is generally the Fault of Eloquent and contemplative Men to out-shoot the Mark they aim at; and whilst they talk finely, to deliver very unpracticable things. Pardon me, dear *Sebastian*, if I suppose this Infirmary hath accompanied those great accomplishments in you at this time. No doubt but Meditation is a noble Entertainment of Time; and questionless, he that hath once got the knack of it, nothing in the World is so pleasant to him: But you must consider, there are very few who have so much Command over themselves, as to hold their Minds long steady and intent, and perhaps fewer that have sufficient Knowledge to employ their Thoughts at home; it requires a great Stock for a Man to be able to set up this Trade by himself. Besides, many Mens Spleens are so near their Heads, and there is so great Affinity between the Animal Spirits and Vapours that he that goes to exercise the one, stirs up the other; and oftentimes, the greater the Intention of Mind is with which a Man sets himself to think, the greater Cloud is raised, and the more impossible it will prove for such a Man to discern any thing clearly. Your Advice therefore is very good for them that can receive it; but this is no *Catholicon*, no general Receipt.

Sebast. I thank you, Sir, most heartily for the modest and seasonable Check you gave to the Career of my Discourse: I must confess, upon second Thoughts, that all Men are not fit for Meditation, and therefore it cannot be their Duty; yet I must tell you withal, I suspect more are unwilling, than incapable, and I doubt some are more afraid of awakening their Conscience, than stirring their Spleen by it. However, I have
another

another Expedient to propound, (for the purpose we are upon) which will supply the place of the former, and which, I am sure, can be liable to no Objection; and that is, Conference or Discourse: Which when I have recommended to you, I shall have delivered my whole mind.

Of Friendly Conference, and the great Benefits of it.

God Almighty hath given us Speech to express our selves to one another. We are not left alone in the World so, but that every Man hath some Friend or Neighbour to hold correspondence with: Why should we not then entertain our selves, our friends, and our time in friendly Communication, without the help of the Bottle? &c. This requires no great intention of Mind, no great Stock is required in this Case; this will stir up no Vapours from our Spleen; and by this way we may not only divert our selves, but elucidate our own thoughts, enlarge our experience, resolve one another's difficulties, and mutually please and profit one another.

And the more effectually to recommend this Expedient to you, I will first take the confidence to affirm, and do not doubt but I shall by and by make it evidently appear, that this is not only a very gentile and creditable way of conversation, but also (if it be rightly practised) a most pleasant and delightful, and (which perhaps may seem the greatest Paradox of all) one of the most healthful Exercises in the World.

The first of these you will easily grant me, when you consider that Discourse is that which principally distinguishes a wise Man from a Fool. For, what else do we take our measures of

of one another by? If a Man discourse of weighty Matters, and keep close to the Point, and speak sharply in the Case, we account him a worthy Man. But contrariwise, if he talk flatly, insipidly and impertinently, we have no esteem or reverence for such a person, let his outward appearance and circumstances be otherwise what they will.

It is certain we cannot know a Man's thoughts, or the sence of his mind, till he expresses them: A Fool, we say, is a wise Man so long as he holds his peace, and a wise Man differs nothing from A Fool till he speaks. For a Man's Actions may be by rote or custom, or the direction of some other Person, but a Mans discourse is his own. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, said our Saviour. The tongue will betray not only the Inclinations and Passions of the heart, but the very sence and capacity of the mind; and the latter much more than the former, (as the Liquor will carry the tincture of the Vessel.) 'Tis possible, indeed, for an evil and vicious Man to talk vertuously, and a silly Man may get into a road of wise Sayings: but the Lesson he hath conn'd will soon be at an end, and then he will no more be able to hold out at that rate, than a flaw'd Vessel to make the same sound with a good one. Wisdom and Folly are widely different in their natures; but it is Discourse that lays them open, and makes the distinction conspicuous: Why then should not a Man, by practice, endeavour to become expert at that which, if he be Master of, will be his Glory, but to be sure will make his Character.

But now for the vulgar Methods of Conversation, which commonly consists of Drinking
and

Drinking and Gaming are Levelling Practices.

and Gaming, they are no better than Levelling Practices, that observe no Distance, nor make any Distinction amongst Men; the Master and Servant are at *Hail Fellow*, the Gentleman and the Clown are upon the Square with one another; the Man of Parts and Learning and the veriest Idiot and Coxcomb are upon even Ground in those Entertainments.

As for Drinking, I cannot sufficiently wonder at that Abjection of Mind in Persons of Quality, who, as if they consented to their own Degradation, will contend for Victory with their Inferiors at equal Glasses; when it is notorious, that a Porter shall bear more than a Gentleman; and a fine Wit shall be baffled and disordered with that which a thick-skull'd dull Sot will carry away well enough, and come off as wise a man as he entred. But suppose the Gentleman should out-do the Clown and the Wit the Dunce; yet as the Match was made very imprudently, so the Victory would be inglorious.

And then for Gaming, I have heard of an Ape that has been too hard for his Master at that most ingenious Game at Chess. But I have known one very near to a Natural, that hath been a great Master at it. And certainly it is very easie to imagine, that in those other Games, that are governed by chance, the Victory may fall to the less worthy Person. It seems therefore a very mean thing to be eagerly intent upon that to which a wise Man hath no better Title than a Fool, and, if we believe the Proverb, much less. To be sure no Man can be so vain as to think himself the wiser or better

better Man for his Conquest. But now, Discourse discriminates Men's real Abilities, and bears an impartial Testimony to a Man's Worth; and the Contests of Reason are therefore truly honorable, because the Wiser Man is sure to have the Victory.

But then Secondly, For the pleasure and delightfulness of Discourse, it cannot be doubted, but that the Higher Powers in a Man are attended with the sweetest Delights, in the Exercise of themselves; and the more strong and vigorous the Constitution of those Powers is, the more quick and ravishing must the sense of their

The pleasure of Discourse.

peculiar Pleasure consequently be. This the Experience of all studious Men bears testimony to; amongst whom, one Truth sifted out by Reason, is more pleasant than all the Entertainments of an Epicure. For in Discourse there is a very grateful Relish in the mere bandying of Arguments to and fro; great Curiosity in distinguishing; Prettiness in a handsomely dress'd Probability; Surprize in Paradoxes ingenuously maintained; admirable Beauty in that strange variety of Colours in which a good Wit will represent things, far beyond the Hand and Skill of a Painter: All which, with a Thousand other Particulars which I pass by, render the Pleasure of Discourse us much transcendent to all Instances of sensuality, as Reason it self is above Sense, or a Man superior to a Beast.

And now, in the last place, for that seeming Paradox concerning the wholesomeness of Discourfing: It is observed, that they who are curious

*Discourfing an
healthful Exercise.*

dies

dies, to the end that they may invigorate all their Powers and Faculties, have to that purpose found out appropriate Exercises to all the principal parts: For so they say, Walking is peculiarly good for Digestion, by gently agitating the Stomach and Bowels; Riding is singularly beneficial to the Head; playing at Bowls helps the Reins, and the use of the Long-bow is especially commended for opening the Breast and Lungs, &c. Now I think I may be bold to say, that whatsoever each of these is to its respective Part and Member, that will smart and vigorous Conference perform to the whole Man. For, as to the very bodily Powers, it warms the Heart and Stomach, dries the brain, opens the Lungs, quickens the Motion of the Blood, and brings a fresh and florid Colour into the Face and whole Habit. And then, as for the better part of Man; Discourse raises the Fancy, exercises the Memory, clears the Thoughts, enlightens the Judgment, and improves the Reasoning of the Mind. To which add, if you please, that it diverts Melancholy, puts off Dozing, banishes anxious Thoughts and Sollicitude; and, in a ward, holds a Man so fully employed, that it leaves no room for the very Temptations of the Devil.

And now I appeal to you; judge whether I have performed my promise, or no: If I have, then, besides all the afore-mentioned, here is a Manly Employment of time always at hand; an Exercise that every one is capable of that hath a Tongue in his Head, and a Soul in his Body. Thus we may treat our Neighbour, and cost us nothing but what we (it seems) have too much of, I mean Time. And thus we may profit

profit our selves, and oblige him too beyond all other Entertainments.

Phil. I have a great reverence for your judgment ; but, in truth I cannot tell what to say to this Gossiping kind of Diversion, and till this moment, I never thought Lip-Labour had been of such value. As for thinking Men, the World is content to let them enjoy the Reputation of being wise, or at least to suspend their judgment of them till they see the contrary in the unreasonableness of such Men in all the instances of gentile and pleasant Conversation. But as for talkative Men, (I need not tell you) they have ever been accounted troublesome and impertinent. And for your own part, good *Sebastian*, give me leave to say, that your practice confutes your Doctrine ; for after all this which, with great Wit and Eloquence, you have spoken in the commendation of discursive Conversation ; and notwithstanding that every one who knows you, knows your singular dexterity in managing any Subject that falls under debate in your company ; yet you, of all Men, are generally observed to be the most silent and reserved. It is true at this time you have been disposed to talk very freely with me (for which I am greatly obliged to you ;) but at several other times it is a hard matter to pump any thing out of you.

Sabast. I see plainly that there is a wrong as well as a right handle to every thing, and a continual proneness in Men to mistake one another. Whensoever any Vice is censured, or exposed, Men presently think the contrary Extream to that Practice must needs be the Vertue: So whilst I have been recommending ingenuous and friendly Conference, you represent

sent me as if I had made it my design to plead for impertinent Talkativeness; which, truly, I am so far from, that I think the World doth that sort of Men no Wrong in the Censure it passes upon them; amongst whom, (if it be a wise Man's Lot to be cast) he will think himself in the Region of Parrots; and for his Deliverance, be tempted to pray for Deafness, as a great Blessing. No, *Phil.* no; I would neither have Men say all they can, nor much less talk whether they can or no; but I would have them first think to direct their speaking, and then speak, that a Judgment may be made of their Thoughts: I would that Men should bend their Minds whenever they relax their Tongues, and try the Strength of one anothers Heads in Reasoning, rather than in Drinking.

But then, as for what your self or others have observed of my Carriage in Company, I confess the Observation is rightly taken, and I will ingenuously assign you the Occasions of it;

*Just Occasions of
Taciturnity or Re-
servedness sometimes
in Conversation.*

which are (as far as I know my self) such as these: In the first place, it sometimes falls out, that the Subject which other Men are discoursing of, is not very agreeable to my Mind; as in these unquiet Times, the common Theme is News; which, as it is usually managed is frequently attended with Pragmaticalness, and censure of the Government under which we live; or, at least, the Effect of it is, the filling one another with Fears and Jealousies, and the Tormenting a Man's self before the time, with his own or other Men's Dreams and suspicions. Now in this Case I am generally silent; at least, till I can find a fit

transition

transition, and have the good luck to turn the stream of Discourse some other way.

Again, sometimes I am in the Company of those who are every way my Betters; and there I think it is much more advisable to hear than to speak, as it is better to reap than to sow.

Sometimes also I meet with a Company of desultorious Wits, who skip so hastily from one thing to another that they over-run me; and whilst I am meditating what to say pertinently to the Question in hand, they are gotten into another Subject: a Man must ride post, or be left behind by such Discourfers.

But besides all this, sometimes a meer melancholy humour seizes me; which so benumbs me, that I am for that fit altogether useles in Society. But let that be as it may, or however my practice falls short in my counsel, I am certain my Example is not sufficient to counterbalance the Reasons I have given. Wherefore let me, again heartily recommend it to you, not only for its own benefit: but if it were but to supersede and lay aside those other soft and silly diversions which have of late so far usurped upon humane Society, as well nigh wholly to ingross to themselves all Mens vacant hours, and a great deal more.

Phil. You have the Ascendant of me, and may perswade me to what you will: But, Good Sir, do not convert me from a good Fellow to a prating Fool. If I had been used to study, and been conversant in Books, as you have, I might have been in a capacity to please my self, and perhaps the Company too with Discourse; but for want of that Education, silence will generally be my best discretion.

Sebast. Books, Phil. It is neither Books nor much reading that makes a wise Man. How many shrewd Men have you known, and very well accomplished in most parts of Conversation, that never had any great matter of Clerkship? And on the other side, amongst the great number of those that have had all the advantages of Bookish Education, how few are those that are really the better for it? With many Men Ready is nothing better than a dozing kind of Idleness, and the Book is a mere Opiate that makes them sleep with their eyes open. 'Tis

Of the use and abuse of Books and Reading.

perverted into an Antidote against thinking wisely, and made a creditable pretence for dismissal of business. Such Mens studying is only an artifice to reconcile the ease and voluptuousness of sloth with the reputation of wisdom; a gentile and wary kind of Epicurism, that surfeits without pain or shame, and in which Men spend their time without profit to themselves, or usefulness to the World.

Again, there are some with whom Bookishness is a Disease: For by overmuch Reading they surcharge their minds, and so digest nothing. They stuff themselves so full of other Mens Notions, that there is no room for their faculties to display themselves. Such as these after all their Reading can no more be accounted learned, than a Beast of burden may that carries a Student's Books for him. Only so much Meat is properly nourishment to the Body as a Man can macerate and digest, as he can apply to the reparation of his Body, when he can separate the superfluities, and be stronger and lighter after it: more than this breeds ill humors,

obstructs

obstructs the passages, and impairs the state of health instead of advancing it; and so much Study only is profitable as will excite a Man's thoughts, as will afford hints or sallies to the mind, or as will furnish him with matter for Meditation and Discourse; which two last things are the two great instruments of improving our selves, and therefore are to prescribe the measures of our study and reading.

Wherefore it was well said by a Great Man of our Country, That Reading indeed might make a full and copious Man, but Meditation made a profound Man, and Discourse a clear, distinct and useful Man. For Reading at most doth but make a Man's mind equal to that of the Author he reads; but Meditation sets him upon the shoulders of his Author, by which means he sees farther than he did or could do. Or whereas the one may fill up all the present capacity of a Man's mind, the other, *viz.* Meditation, stretches and enlarges those capacities. And then for Discourse (which is that we are now speaking of) besides the advantages which it hath in common with Meditation, it opens and unfolds a Man's thoughts, and so brings his Notions to a Test, and makes proof of the solidity or weakness of his Conceptions: By which means, as on the one hand he shall not run away with the shadows of things instead of the substance; so on the other hand, when his apprehensions are sifted, and approved to be right and sound, his mind will be confirmed against wavering, and he will become constant and consistent with himself. I have often observed, with equal pleasure and wonder, that by the mere propounding a difficulty to another, I have presently been

able to resolve that which was too hard for me; whilst I revolved it only in my own Breast. For, by that opening and unfolding of our thoughts, we let in light to our own judgments, and see clearer than we did before.

Besides, a Man is too apt to have a partial fondness to the issue of his own brain; but when he hath brought his conceptions to the impartial Touch stone of other Men's judgments, and as it were tried them by the light, he will neither be apt to be upon all occasions over-confident, peremptory and dogmatical; (as you may observe many reserved studious Men to be, who when once they give vent to their thoughts, labour under a kind of incontinency of mind, and will be continually dictating and asserting at all adventures) nor on the other side will he stumble at every rub, and stagger at every objection, and so give up the best Cause upon the slightest (but unforeseen) Attack.

And there is one thing more very considerable in this matter; namely that by Conference a Man is accustomed to methodize and digest his thoughts in order; by which means his Notions are not only rendered more beautiful, but are more at hand, and also more perspicuous and fitter for use. Whereas contrariwise (let a Man have read never so much, and meditated too in to the bargain) without this expedient all his Notions will lie very oddly and confusedly, and come out all in a heap or huddle. In sum, He that uses himself only to Books, is fit for nothing but for a Book; and he that converses with no body, is fit to converse with no body.

Phil. In truth, *Sebastian*, though I am very sensible of my own defects in Point of Learning;
yet

yet in that little experience which I have had in the World I have seen so many instances of the ill use, or rather no use that some Men have made of it, than I am not only convinced there is some truth in what you say, but am the better inclined to be content with my own education. I have known some mighty Bookish Men like full Vessels without vent, as if they were troubled with the Gripes; their Notions ferment in them, but they cannot utter them either to their own ease, or the profit of others. And again, some Mens learning hath served only to make them pedantick and troublesome, to make a noise with words and terms of Art, every whit as offensive as the clatter of the Tablemen, which you laugh'd at even now. Notwithstanding, by your favour, it cannot be doubted but Learning hath mighty advantages; and I verily think you should speak against your own Conscience, if you condemned it in the general: Wherefore you must excuse me if I continue of the opinion, that it is next to impossible, without more of it than I can pretend to, to hold such Conversation as you are putting me upon.

Sebast. Excuse me, Dear *Phil.* I do not in the least put any slight upon Learning, or the means of it, Books and Study; I know well it is of admirable use in a wise Man's hand, because it gradually and insensibly opens Mens minds, and both gives them a quicker sight, and affords them a larger prospect. And even on the most ordinary-parted Men it hath at least this effect, to calm the Spirits, and to sweeten their temper, by subduing the fierceness and ferity of Mens Constitutions. And therefore I heartily wish, that no Gentlemen (especially) were permitted

to attain his State and Fortunes without this qualification. So that all I was saying was only this, that you nor any Man of your capacity ought to discourage your selves upon the pretence of your lesser advantages that way ; forasmuch as a wise and good Man may (though perhaps not with the same ease) with a very little of it maintain an ingenuous and profitable Conversation.

Phil. Perhaps it may be so as you say : But then certainly a Man must have very extraordinary natural abilities to supply that defect.

Sebast. No, *Phil.* that needs not neither ; for Discourse will both supply

Conversation improves a Man more than Books and Study.

the want of acquired abilities, and also improve the natural. I suppose you remember the saying of Solomon, *As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.*

I confess I have heard that passage of the wise Man applied to the visiting and comforting a Friend in Adversity, which certainly doth mightily buoy up and support a Man's Spirits when he finds that he is not altogether forsaken of his Friend, but owned by him in the lowest ebb of his Fortunes. But I think it is every whit as true and applicable to that we are speaking of, as if he had said, that the Company and Conversation of a Friend doth as well quicken a Man's wits and improve his understanding, as one Iron Instrument is sharpened by another. For as I said before, Conference and Discourse give us the advantage of whatsoever he (we converse with) hath read or thought upon that Subject, and so we reap the benefit of his reading and of his meditations too. And then besides

sides that, we exercise our own judgment upon the matter so digested and prepared for us; the very presence and attention of our Friend sharpens the attention of our minds; his Question prevents our extravagancy and wandering, and keeps us in a method, and his expectation from us holds our thoughts close and steady to the Point in Debate. By all which not only the Stock of our Knowledge is improved, but the Patrimony also; I mean the very powers of the Soul. In consideration of all which that Great Man of our Country, whom I cited but now, doth not stick to pronounce, That if it should be a Man's hard Fortune to have no body to converse withal, it were better he should talk to a post than not open his mouth at all.

Phil. There you nick it, *Sebastian*; by that last word (whoever was the Author of it) I perceive a wise Man may make some use of such a Tool as I am, if it be but to reflect and echo back his own Thoughts upon himself. But in earnest, Sir, now that you have encourag'd me, I begin to think something better of my self, and am resolved to try what may be done in the way you recommend. But what would you have a Man discourse about? I am afraid, if there be not some care in the Choice of a Subject, all will degenerate into Gossiping and impertinent Chat.

Sebast. There is no need of solicitude in that Particular, forasmuch as any, even the most obvious and occasional Subject, will enable us to attain the end we aim at, provided it be followed home; I mean, talk of what matter you will, if so be you do not talk flatly and carelessly about it, but set your thoughts on work and
E 4 they

they will bring forth both pleasure and profit. For the more exercise of our minds improves them as well as that of the body doth the state of bodily health ; and whilst our thoughts are intent, though we are not sensible how time slips away, yet we shall be sensible in the conclusion that we have not quite lost it.

Besides, you have observed Musicians to make the most curious descant upon the plainest ground, and have seen several of the *Indian* Manufactures, where the most exquisite Art hath been bestowed upon the meanest Materials: 'Tis not therefore the Theme, but the prosecution of it that is considerable ; for, as I said, Let that be what you will, if you pursue it with a train of Thoughts, and especially if you be Vigilant to take notice of, and apprehend those hints that will thence be occasionally started, you shall quickly be amazed to find your self led before you were aware into some spacious and beautiful Field of Contemplation, wherein you may at once both lose and refresh your self.

Notwithstanding, I acknowledge to you that the pitching upon some good and usefull subject at first is both the shortest and the surest way to attain our end. For the very importance and concern of a weighty affair naturally rouses up our minds, and collects and fixes our loose and scattered thoughts ; as you shall seldom see any Man drouzie and inattentive whilst a matter of consequence to his Life, or Credit, or Fortune is in agitation.

Therefore that having thus prepared you to it, I may now speak a great truth to you, and that you may effectually shake off all the fooleries

ries in fashion, and make conversation profitable. And if indeed you would awaken your Senses, and improve your self and your time together, let me above all things in the World commend to you Religious Communication, talk of the Concerns of a Soul, and of another World. This is a Subject of that weight and moment, that it cannot fail either to make you intent, or the Company you shall be in grave and serious; and it is withal so vast and large, that you can never fear to be run on ground; for it will always afford you fresh matter of Discourse.

*Discourse about
religious Matters
recommended.*

Phil. 'Tis true, the Subject is copious enough, and I may be sure to have it all to my self, because no body will talk with me about it. Who is there now-a-days that troubles his Head with Religion, or especially makes it any part of Conversation? If perhaps any mention of it fall in by the bye, it is presently let fall again, as if it were too hot for mens Fingers, and at most it is made but a kind of Parenthesis, which may be kept in, or left out of the Discourse without interruption of the Sense. You have found me out a Subject indeed, but now you must seek me out Company too to treat upon it. For as the World now is, this will seem so irksome a business, that no time will be so tedious as that which is spent upon it, and so we have lost the whole design we were levelling at.

Sebast. Who (say you) will discourse of Religion? Why, every body sure that thinks of it, for it is a matter that comes so home and close to every Man, that he must be a stark Sot, and destitute of the common sense and discretion

discretion of a Man, that is not mightily affected with it.

For, tell me, is there any Man so absurdly vain as to think he shall not die? Can any Man that observes the frail contexture of his Body, and the innumerable accidents he is subject to, think himself immortal? or can he overlook the common condition of Mankind, and when he sees Men daily drop away and die in their full strength; and in spite of all helps and advantages of preservation; yet be so fond as to imagine he shall escape the common lot? And seeing what happens to another Man to day, may befall himself to morrow; or however, he is certain that he cannot be of any long continuance in this World; who, I say, that is sensible of this, can chuse but pry beyond the Curtain, and bethink himself what shall come after?

Is it not the very temper and constitution of our minds to be inquisitive of the future? Is it not a great part of our Prerogative above Beasts, that whereas they are wholly taken up with what's present to them, and neither mind what is past nor to come; we by the largeness of our Souls embrace both, and do we not worthily count him an Idiot, that is so short-sighted as not to see beyond his Nose end?

Doth not every wise Man provide for what may be? and do not even the most cold and incredulous suspect at least there may be something concern us after the present life? and is there any Man that can, if he would never so fain, quite rid his thoughts of it? Sure therefore every Man that thinks he shall die (that is, every Man that lives) thinks something of Religion,

*The Importance
of Religion.*

ligion, if it be but for fear of the Worst. Perhaps you will say, there are some Men, who though they know they shall die, yet think they shall die as the Beasts die, and have no concern hereafter: But are they worthy to be accounted Men that can fanſie ſuch a thing? A Beast indeed hath life, and ſenſe, and motion, and participates of ſome kind of fancy and memory; but doth it underſtand a Diſcourſe, or weigh an Argument? Is it able to infer from Premiſes, to remember things gone and paſt, and recall them to mind at pleaſure? Can it compare things together, gather the reſult, diſtinguiſh or paſs a judgment upon Appearances? Will any Man be ſo ridiculous as to ſay, Beasts are conſcientious too, that they reflect upon their own Actions, and accuſe and excuſe themſelves accordingly? or have they free will to determine their Elections which way they pleaſe, even againſt the intereſt of their ſenſes? Now he that conſiders all theſe vaſt differences will, if he have the Reaſon of a Man, conclude it very improbable, that a Creature of this admirable make ſhould be only deſigned to be a Pageant for a day, and be totally diſſolved at the date of this ſhort Life; eſpecially if he conſider withal that theſe powers and capacities, which we have ſhewn Man to be endued with, do not only put him upon the thoughts, and expectations, and deſires of another ſtate; but render him marvellouſly fit for it, and capable of it; inſomuch that ſeveral of the nobleſt of theſe endowments are wholly in vain, if there be no ſuch thing, and that a Man died as the Beasts do.

Beſides all this, doth not every Man that hath Eyes in his Head to obſerve the admirable ſtructure

ature of the World, conclude that it must be the Workmanship of a God, and he a great, a wise, a good and a just Being; and can he think so, and not resolve there must be a great necessity of, and reality in Religion? that is, in the reverend observance of that Great Majesty that deserves it, and who hath both made us capable of performing it to him, and obliged us thereunto.

Now if all, or but any part of this be true, who is so mad, as to have no concern for this God, Religion, and another World? and who is there that having any concern for them, can chuse but think fit to make it some part of his business, the employment of some part of his time, and the Subject of his most serious debates. Hath any Man a most important Cause *sub Judice*, and his Trial drawing on; and doth he never think of it, or discourse this Case with his Friends? Hath any Man a great Estate in a Foreign Country, or a huge Patrimony in reversion, and never speaks of it? Hath any Man either a considerable Friend or a formidable Enemy, and never expresses himself concerning the one or the other? Surely therefore seeing Religion imports all these Concernments, a Man may find those that will discourse with him on the Point.

Phil. I readily consent to you that the business of Religion is a most serious affair, and worthy of the greatest consideration; but besides (as I have said) there are very few will correspond with a Man in discourse about it; To tell you truly, I am somewhat of opinion, that it is not fit for that kind of treatment. As it is a sacred, so it is a secret thing, transacted only between God and a Man's own Conscience,

science, and therefore is rather the Theme of a Man's thoughts, the solitary employment of his own heart; and so fit to be kept up in the Closet of his breast, and not so proper matter for Discourse.

Sebast. And I as readily yield to you, dear *Phil.* that the Soul and Spirit of Religion is very retired and inward; and so inaccessible to other Men, that they can neither see it, nor judge of it. But though the first source and springs of it

Religion rests not in the mind only.

lie very deep, yet why the streams of it should not issue forth, both in words and actions, I cannot comprehend. I have read of a sort of Men about the Apostolick times, called *Gnosticks*, who gave out that it was sufficient to retain an inward belief, and a right sense of Christian Religion in their minds and hearts, although they neither made profession of the Faith with their mouths, nor practised the Laws of it in their Lives and Conversations. This I look upon as an hypocritical Artifice of theirs, to the end that they might make a saving bargain of Christianity; a device to sleep in a whole skin, and neither run any hazards, nor put themselves to any difficulties for Conscience sake; and if they got nothing by Christ Jesus, they thought they would be sure to lose nothing by him. But as I am very confident a Man of your sincerity can harbour none of their designs, so I assure my self what you have said is not upon their Principles. Yet I must tell you, when the Apostle levell'd a blow at them, he reached your fancy also; for he saith expressly, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

Phil.

Phil. O pardon me, *Sir*? I make no Question, but that when a Man is called to make profession of his Faith, and to discover what Religion he is of, then to dissemble is to betray it, and to be silent on such a critical occasion is to revolt and Apostatize from it; and in that sence (I take it) another Apostle hath required us, *To render to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, &c.* As if he had said, Be not ashamed of your persuation, but own and defend your Religion, at the greatest and most adverse Tribunals where-ever it shall be impeached. But this is not the Case: We are not now speaking of what must be done upon an authoritative Inquisition into our Consciences, or in times of Persecution: but what is to be done in Times of Peace, and in common Conversation: And then and there I am still of Opinion that, at least, it is not an expresse Duty to talk of Religion.

Sebast. Nor do I differ from you therein. For I do not assert it as an universal Duty to make Religion the matter of our Discourse: But my meaning is, that it will exceedingly become us to do so sometimes. And I verily assure my self, that he that hath a quick sence of God upon his mind, will have savoury expressions of him sometimes upon ordinary occasions, (if a foolish modesty do not too much overcome him) as well as witness a good Confession in times of Persecution: For, as our Saviour said, (in the passage I mentioned before) *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* And it seems to me more easily conceivable that there should be a great fire without any smoke, or a great light without any heat, than that such

such a Man as is inwardly principled with the fear and love of God should be wholly tonguetied, or be either able or willing altogether to stifle and suppress his sentiments. *Can a man carry fire in his bosom, (said the Wise Man) and not be burnt?* Such an holy fervour as I speak of will assuredly both seek and find a vent for it self, and break out, upon all fitting occasions, in reverend and affectionate expressions: By which means a Man, in the first place, eases his own breast; and besides, thus this holy fire not only preserves it self from extinction, but propagates it self also, warming and inflaming others.

You have heard, I suppose, of an odd Superstition among the *Jews*, who out of a pretended reverence to the Name of God, and to preserve it from prophanation, (as they supposed) so long forbade the common pronounciation of it, till at length, by the intermission of using it, they had quite forgotten how to pronounce it. And thus I am afraid it will fare with Religion, if Men should (out of I know not what conceit) forbear all Discourse of God and another World; the result would be, that in time both would be forgotten. Nor is

it (as you seem to imagine) only times of Persecution that ought to rowse up our Spirits, and call for expressions of our

Zeal; for the Road of business, the successively flowing Tide of variety of Entertainments in this World, the soft Charms of pleasant Recreations, the Blandishments of continual Prosperity, and the Rust upon our Minds contracted by lying still in ease and security, do more endanger

Religious Discourse is necessary in times of prosperity, as of persecution.

endanger the state of Religion, than those trying times you speak of. And therefore Atheism is well known to be a Weed that thrives most in the best Weather. The seed that was sown upon Stony Ground fell away when the hot Sun scorched it, because it had no depth of Earth; but that which was sown among the Thorns was choaked too, though the Soil was never so good: in a word, stormy Weather in the Church may tempt Men to be false and treacherous, and Renegadoes, but I believe it never made an Atheist; that and Prophaneness are the ill fruit of Prosperity. So that you see there is need that the Spirit of Piety should exert it self as well in the one season, as in the other.

Neither will the publickly stated times, or forms and exercises of Religion sufficiently secure it against this danger, without such voluntary efforts and sallies of it as we are speaking of: For in regard God is not to be seen, and the World is before us; the World to come is at distance, and the present World at hand; ill examples are numerous, and good ones few and rare: And, in a word, we dwell in so cold a Region, that we had need not only to use a great deal of exercise, but frequently to rub up one another. Therefore as *Socrates* is said to have brought down Philosophy (*è Cælo in urbes*) from speculation to practice, from high notions to the common affairs of life; so it seems necessary to us, not only to be religious at Church, and devout in our Closets, but to allow it a share in our daily and ordinary converse.

Phil. Nay, If you be for that, what think you of a demure sort of People amongst us, that, as if their tongues were tip'd with Religion, will

be always canting in a Scripture. *Of Hypocritical Canting.*
phrase. These Men seem to think it prophane to speak intelligibly, and in the common Language; and account a Jewish kind of Gibberish to be the peculiar *Shibboleth* of the Godly party: And some of them arrive at such a pitch, either of Hypocrisie or Melancholy, (I am loth to pronounce whether) that (upon the matter) they allow no other Discourse to be lawful, but what hath a Tincture of Religion. Now, for my part, I look upon these People as very absurd and ridiculous, and therefore I hope you do not intend to give them Countenance in what you are saying.

Seb. st. So far from it, *Phil.* that I account the former of the two sorts of Men which you speak of, to be no better than a Generation of nauseous Pharisees, forasmuch as nothing betrays Hypocrisie so much as Over-doing; and by that Course of theirs they render Religion loathsome and ridiculous, and tempt Men to think it all Trick and Cheat. And for the other, they seem to be a pitiable, but crack-brain'd sort of Men, who render Religion very uncomfortable to themselves, and, indeed, impracticable and impossible. God knows, we are not Angels, but Men; and have Concerns for the present World, as well as for the other; and consequently, it can be no Fault, but a just Duty, to take care of them; and, in order thereto, to deliberate, to take Advice, and to discourse about them.

And this I am so confident of, that I verily believe the Apostle, when he forbids *that any corrupt Communication shall proceed out of our Mouths*, and enjoins *that it be such as is good, to the use of edifying*, intended we should interpret the latter

ter Expression by the former, *viz.* that instead of rotten and filthy Talk, we should tend so earnestly to the contrary, that we might turn the Stream of Men's Discourse to that which is virtuous and profitable. And when he adds, *That it may minister Grace to the Hearers*, I think he requires that every Thing which I have been recommending to you; namely, that we should take all fair Opportunities of bringing Religion into plea and of suggesting good Meditations to one another. But I can by no means think he restrains all Communication to that Subject, provided that which is about other Matters be

Common Discourse lawful.

not lewd nor foolish, but favourable and ingenious, useful and pertinent. And this I am the more confirmed in by another Passage of the same

Col. iv. 6.

Apostle, where he directs that *our Speech be seasoned with Grace, as with Salt.* Which, as I understand it, imports as if he said, that our most common Conversation should have some Relish of our Religion; not be wholly religious, no more than our Meat should be all Salt; but seasoned with it.

Moreover, when our Saviour fore-warns us, *That for every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account at the day of Judgment*, I can by no means think his meaning was, that every Word that hath not immediate relation to Religion should be accounted idle, and, as such, incur Damnation. Far be such an Interpretation from the merciful and condescending Laws of our Saviour. If this were so, Christianity was a most anxious thing, and the Lives of Men must be perpetually vexed with Scrupulosity. But I take it, he intended only to represent to us, that the

the Judgment to come shall be very exact and particular, so as to take notice, not only of our Actions, and the greater Passages of our Lives, but that our very Words also shall come into Estimate and Consideration.

You see therefore I am so far from countenancing either an hypocritical Cant, or a superstitious Melancholy, that I do not think Religion ought importunately to thrust it self into Conversation to the Exclusion of every thing besides it self; but that it have place in our Debates; and where there is Room for Choice, there it is my Opinion that we give it also the Precedence.

Phil. Well, so far we are agreed: But, I pray, give me leave to go a little farther with you. What kind of Religious Conference is it you would be at? Would you have Men enter into Disputes about Divine Matter? This I the rather ask, because there is another sort of Men (besides those we now spake

Of Disputes in Religion the Vanity and Mischiefs of them.

of) who seem to be mighty zealous of Religion; but their Heat breaks out wholly this way, and they fill the place wherever they are with Noise and Clamour, with Dust and Smoak: Nothing can be said in their presence, but instantly a Controversie is started, the Cudgels are taken up, and to it they go: Scarcely any Body is Orthodox enough for them; for they spin so fine a Thread, and have such Cobweb-Divinity, that the least Brush against it is not to be endured: And yet withal, they are as positive and decretal in their Assertions, that the Pope himself is no body to them. One would think they were Privy Counsellors of Heaven, they define with so great Confidence

what will, and what will not please God; and damn to the Pit of Hell all that come not up exactly to their Definitions and Determinations. These, I assure you, are Men that bear a great Port in the World, therefore I would fain know your Opinion of them.

Sebast. Truly, *Phil.* I have no Opinion of them at all; I fancy neither their Faith, nor their Charity; the one I account to be a great deal too big, and the other as much too little.

Phil. Agreed again. And now I'll tell you my Thoughts a little more fully on this Point: I have always looked upon this Disputative Religiousness, as no better than a new fashioned Knight-Erantry, which puts Men continually upon Quest of Adventures, and makes Monsters of every Wind-mill that comes in their way. For these Men, if there do but happen to be an inconsiderate Expression let fall by any Body, presently raise such a Tragedy upon it, as if Faith consisted wholly of Punctilio's, (or, as if you should say, a Line was made up of Points,) and that every petty Opinion were of moment enough to overturn the World. The contrary whereof I take to be so true, that I suspect whether that be of any moment in Religion which admits of Dispute; for methinks it is not agreeable to the Goodness of God, to suffer any thing of that universal Concern to all Men, to remain very obscure and controversial. I should think therefore this knotty kind of Timber never fit for Edification. In plain truth, (if you will pardon a rude Similitude) I fancy these great Masters of Dispute to be like the ordinary Professors of Rat-catching, who commonly draw more Vermin to the place than they destroy;

so these raise more Controversies than they can decide, start more Difficulties than they can assuage; and so beget Schisms, gratify Pride, inflame Differences, and foment Heart-burnings amongst Men, that might otherwise live peaceably together here, and, for ought I know, go to Heaven hereafter.

Sebast. Most ingeniously spoken, dear *Phil.* and according to my very Heart. If I thought I could match your Wit, I would add, That whenever I see a Knot of these Disputants together, it puts me in mind of a Story, or Fable, which you will, of a Company of Apes that had gotten a Gloe-worm amongst them, upon which they heaped Sticks, and other little combustible Matter; and laying their Heads together, blow withal their Might, as hoping to make some strange Improvement of that little shining Particle: But when they have done all they can, are neither able to increase the Light, nor much less to warm themselves by it. So these busie disputing Wits, after all their blustering, neither bring any useful Truth to light, nor warm their own or other Men's Breasts with any Spark of true Piety or Charity; but contrariwise, frequently obscure the one, and extinguish the other.

It is not therefore Disputing in Religion that I would provoke you to; but the Improvement of the indisputable Rules of it; viz. to make yourself, and those you converse with, sensible of the Vital Principles and Powers of Christianity; not to chase one another into a Passion, but to rub up one anothers Sentiments, and mutually to warm one anothers Hearts with Devotion. By wise and affectionate Applications to beget an

equal Fervour of Spirit. And, in a Word, that when Friends are met together, they should, like Flint and Steel, raise both Light and Heat by their mutual and amicable Collisions.

And why, I pray you, dear *Phil.* should not Religion have its Turn in our Conversation? What Reason can be given that pious Men should not discourse as freely and favourily of holy Things, as they, or other Men, concerning common Affairs? Why should our lesser Concerns for this World, our Secular Business, be the only Subject of our Communication? Why, when some talk of their Trades, their Pleasures, and of News, and the like, should not we talk of our Callings, as we are Christians, of the Interest of our Souls, and the Hopes in another World? Why may not we discourse of our Heavenly Country, whither we are going, as well as other Men busie themselves about Foreign Countries, which perhaps they never saw, nor ever shall be concerned in?

You your self acknowledge Religion to deserve the most serious and attentive Consideration of our Minds; and upon the same Account (if you be consistent with your self) you will be induced to believe it the most worthy and commendable Subject of Discourse, as having all those Advantages that can recommend any Subject to the Debate of ingenious Men; as it were easie to make appear, if it were necessary.

Phil. Sir, I value your Judgment, but must make use of my own; if therefore it be not too troublesome to you, let me intreat you to make out that more fully to me? and then, I promise you, I will either comply with the Reasons you give, or will shew you mine to the contrary.

Schaf.

Sebast. With all my Heart, Sir: And, to do it with as much Brevity as may be, I will desire you to consider in the first place, whether this Subject, Religion, does not contain in it the most noble and excellent Points of Enquiry, and consequently, be not the most worthy, not only to take up the Affections, but to exercise the Wits of Men upon: Such as, for instance, about the Nature and Attributes of God; the Wisdom of that Providence that manages and governs the World; the Nature of Spirits, and particularly of the Soul of Man, of Conscience, and Freedom of Will; of the Nature and Obligation of Laws; of the Grounds of Faith, and the Efficacy of it; of the Nature and Success of Repentance; of Redemption, and the Way of Propitiating God to Man; of the Judgment to come, the Resurrection of the Body, and Eternal Life; with abundance more of the like nature; Points all vastly great and copious, profound and difficult; yet equally necessary and discoverable; such as are able to stir up and provoke the greatest Capacities, and yet invite and encourage the meanest. In a word, such things as that there is nothing else within the whole Sphere of Knowledge, that either requires or deserves such serious Debates.

*Religion the
most noble Subject of
Discourse.*

Now how trivial and childish a thing were it, whilst we have all these wise and concerning Matters to treat of, to be taken up only with Dogs and Horses, with Drinks and Sawces, with Fashions and News, (as is too commonly the Practice?)

And if you will please to consider well the aforesaid Particulars, and especially if you make

*Pleasantness of
Religious Confe-
rence.*

trial of the Course I am advising you, you will find these Subjects to be every whit as pleasant and delightful, as they are necessary and important. For what can be imagined able to minister more Delight, than the lively Representation of another World, and Eternal Life, when Men modestly reason together, and endeavour to affect one anothers Hearts with the Certainty and unspeakable Felicity of Living for ever? Of the ravishing Contentment of enjoying Everlasting Friendship? Of being out of the Reach of Fate or Chance; out of the Sphere of Mortality, Sickness and Pain, Care and Vexation? Of being exempted from all Weakness, Silliness, Passion, and Infirmary? Of being exalted above all Temptation, and secured against all possibility of Apostacy? If Discourse of this nature doth not affect a Man beyond all other, it must be because either he hath not the Sense of a Man, or not the Faith of a Christian.

Or suppose Men should take a Subject somewhat lower, and conferr together about the Providence of God, that governs the present World: What a beautiful thing is it to observe all the Variety of Second Causes to move in a just Order under the first, towards certain and uniform Ends, the Glory of God, and Good of Men! And that though the Divine Wisdom may lose and confound us in that admirable Maze it seems to make, yet there is nothing defective or redundant in the whole World, no room for Chance, nothing unforeseen, no cross Accident that hinders the Projection; the same Design is all along carried on, and at last certainly

tainly attained: But especially, if we confine our Contemplations of Divine Providence to that more peculiar Object of his, his Church, it will become yet more visible, and more comfortable; where, if we wisely conferr Times past with the present, and view the whole Process, we shall find, that even Schisms, Heresies, Persecutions, and the greatest Calamities of the Church, tend to its Advantage in Conclusion. But, above all, that which comes nearest to a Man, and must needs affect him most in the Affair of Providence is, that thereby he finds himself under the Protection of a mighty Being, that nothing befalls him without the Consent of his Great Patron, that he his not left to himself to scuffle with ill Fortune and second Causes as well as he can; but he is the Charge of God Almighty; the Favourite of Heaven. This, certainly, is highly pleasant and satisfactory, above any thing in this World.

Or if we go lower yet, and make the Subject of our Discourse to be about Peace of Conscience, of the Bravery of a Victory over a Man's Passions or Temptations, of the unspeakable Comfort and Satisfaction in doing good; any of these will afford us an Entertainment beyond the Flavour of Wine, or the odd Variety of Chance in a Game; and indeed, (to speak to the Point) above all other Subjects of Discourse and Conversation. And although it be true that there is none of these, but a Man may contemplate with great Satisfaction by himself alone, and in Solitude; yet as all social Exercises of the Body are more refreshing than those that are solitary, so it is here; the Comfort that results from those Contemplations is doubled and multiplied by Reflection

Reflection in friendly Conferences. And all this together shall be my first Argument by which I recommend Discourse of Religion. What think you of this, *Philander*?

Phil. I think very well of it: But, I pray you, let me hear out the whole Cause, and then I'll give my Answer.

Schaft. Why, then my second Plea for Religious Discourse is, from the Consideration that it is far the most safe, prudent, and inoffensive Matter of Communication; and that in several

Religious Discourse the most prudent.

Respects. In the first place, it kindles no Coals, stirs up no Strife, inflames no Body's Choler, and touches upon no Man's

Interest or Reputation. You cannot talk of your self, without Vanity or Envy; you can hardly talk of your Neighbours, without some suspicious Reflection; nor of those that are farthest off, but you are in danger that some body present may be concerned for them, as being of their Family or Acquaintance: It is very difficult to talk of News, but you will make your self of some Party or other; and of Opinions, without giving Offence where you did not intend it; and you can scarcely speak of your Governors and Superiors, so as to avoid all Imputation either of Flattery or Pragmaticalness. But here you may talk scarcely, and have this Assurance, That if you profit no body, you shall hurt no Body; if you do not benefit others, you shall not prejudice your self. And then, in the second place, and in consequence of the former; This kind of Discourse will invite no Eves-droppers to listen, and carry Tales of what passed amongst Friends in their Families and Privacies. For
although

although there be hardly any Place so inaccessible, or any retirement so sacred and inviolable, as to be a sufficient Sanctuary against this pestilent sort of Vermine; yet, besides that Matters of Religion afford them the least Hold or Handle the discoursing gravely of it is the most effectual Charm in the World to lay them; so that they shall either not be able, or not be willing to mis-report you. To which add, in the third place, That this Course is one of the most effectual and unexceptionable Ways of ridding our selves of the Company of impertinent People; which I reckon no small Advantage of this kind of Conversation; For this grave and serious Way will certainly either make them better, or make them weary of our Company; this is, we shall either gain them, or gain our Time from them; the least of which two is very desirable. And this is the effect of my second Plea for pious Discourse.

I will trouble you but with one more, and that is, from the Genteelness of this Way of Conversation: It is the most humane, civil and obliging Way of treating Men, and therefore most becoming a Gentleman. We account it some degree of Rudeness to talk *French* or *Latin*, or any other Language, which the Company in which we are do not understand: For it looks as if we were either jealous of them, and therefore would not have them know what we say to others; or else it is as if we had a Mind to upbraid their ignorance, who cannot correspond with us in such a Tongue. And, methinks, as it is usually accounted a piece of Pedantry, and an Argument of defect of generous

Religious Communication Genteel.

perous Education, for a Student to quote his Authors, to talk in Scholastick Phrase, and to vent his Metaphysical Notions in the Company of Gentlemen; so neither is it very decorous and civil on the other side, to be talking altogether in the peculiar Phrase of Faulconry and Hunting in the Company of a Student: And it favours either of great Defect (of other Matter of Discourse) in our selves, or of great Contempt and Insolence towards those others so treated. The Law of Civility is, to be obliging and condescending, to give fair Play and Scope to all we converse with: Now nothing doth this like to Religious Discourse, forasmuch as this being every Man's Calling and Concern, there is no Man but is, or ought to be presumed to be, in some measure, skilful at it. When we talk of that, we talk so as we may all talk; we parly of that which every Man's Profession and Interest obliges him to consider, and which every Man's Conscience admonishes him of; and we speak in the true universal Dialect, which every Man understands.

And this shall be my whole Apology at present for Religious Conference: I could say several things more in the Case, but I will do like a wary Advocate, and reserve them to reply to your Objections. And now, dear *Phil.* what think you upon the whole Matter.

Phil. What should I say, or what can I say, but what a good Cause hath happened upon a good Advocate; a Cause able to make an ordinary Man eloquent, and Eloquence able to make a very indifferent Cause passable?

Sebast. Thank you for nothing, *Phil.* Do you think I will be put off with a stale Complement?

plement? I have, I think, demonstrated that Religious Discourse is both the most manly and rational, the most pleasant and comfortable, the most prudent and wary; and to all this, the most genteel and obliging. Deal now like a Friend and a Gentleman with me; tell me what Flaws you have observed in my Reasoning, or what Objections you have to what I have said.

Phil. To deal plainly and faithfully with you, and my self too, I think your Reasons are unanswerable; and I have nothing to object, but to what you said in the last place, about the Gentleness of this Way of Conversation; and that is only this, Methinks you talk in this Particular, as if you came out of a Cloyster, or rather out of another World; for your Discourse is not calculated for the Age we live in: Alas! the World is not at the pass you suppose; you converse with Books, which fill you with fine Speculations; but had you read Men as much as I have done, you would find, as I said before, that it would be a very difficult thing to get any Body to keep you company at that rate, notwithstanding all the Arguments you have given, or can give for it. You have read (and so have I) of one *Nicodemus*, that came to our Saviour on purpose to conferr with him on the Business of another World; but it is observed he came by Night, as if he was ashamed of his Enterprize: And besides, his Name is, upon this Occasion, (for ought I know) become a By-word, and Name of Reproach to this Day. And we have heard of some other Persons, who in great Agonies of Mind have been inquisitive into those Affairs, and made Religion the principal Theme of their Discourse:

course: But then was then, and now is now; those Men would now be suspected as not well in their Wits that affected so antick a Garb: Inso-much that even Divines themselves, who, for the Honour of their Profession, and upon Account of the Nature of their Office and Studies, may better be allowed to entertain such Discourses; yet (whether, it be out of Modesty, or Deference to the Humour of the Age) it is easily observable, that they generally decline the Way you recommend, and maintain Conversation at the rate of other Men. Judge you therefore, whether, at this time of Day, if a Man in health should talk so, he would not be counted an Hypochondriacal Person; or, especially, if a Gentleman should use it, he would not be wondred at as uncouth and unfashionable.

Nay, that is not the worst of the Case neither: For the now modish way of treating Religion (if by chance it come in the way) is either to find Flaws in it, and by Sceptical Sophisms to undermine the very Foundations of it, or else by Drollery to burlesque and render it ridiculous. To talk malapertly and scurrilously against it, and now and then to break a Jest upon God Almighty, is an Argument of Wit: But to speak gravely and reverently, is dull and tedious beyond Measure; the sure Sign of a formal Fop, or a Phanatick.

Sebast. God forbid! Though I know you understand the World better than I do, because (as you wittily upbraided me) my Conversation is most with the Dead; yet I am in good hope you are now mistaken, and that the State of the Living is not so prodigiously bad as you repre-

sent

sent it. I know there are a sort of Tap-inspired Debauchees, (whose Wit is broached with the Hogshhead, and runs on tilt with it) that love to put Tricks upon every Man, and every Thing that is graver and wiser than themselves : Nor do I so much wonder at it, (considering the Men) forasmuch as if Religion be true, they must expect to be damned ; and if it obtain its just Veneration, they must expect to be the Scorn of Mankind. It is not strange therefore if they (consulting their own Interest) either undermine it, or blaspheme it, that they may have their Revenge upon it before-hand. But take Courage, *Philander*, for these Men's Tongue is no Slander ; neither upon due Consideration, is there more of Wit than of Vertue in their Ribaldry.

As for the more cunning part of them, who will needs be Sceptical, and think to give Proof that they have more Wit than other Men, only because they have less Faith and Modesty ; who knows not how-easie a thing it is to carp, and make Objections ? And that a trifling, captious Coxcomb can ask more Questions than a wise Man can answer ? As any Man may pull down faster than another can build up. It is one Sign of a good Judgment, to be able to ask a discreet and pertinent Question ; and another, to discern what Satisfaction is fit to be expected ; and then, in the third place, there is such a Vertue as modestly to sit down and rest satisfied with such an Answer as the Nature of the Thing will admit of ; all which those captious Hypercriticks are destitute of.

And then, for the prophane Droll : Every Man of Sense and good Manners knows, that
Wit

Wit without Bounds is the very Definition of
of Drollery. Scurrility ; and that it is an easie thing to please a Man's self

in the one, if he have no regard to the other, but will let fly at every thing that comes in his way. For my part, I look upon it as every whit as great an instance of Dulness, as of Impiety, to need so large a Scope for Wit as these Men allow themselves. A good and true Wit will find Matter enough within the Bounds of Sobriety, and not think himself straitned though he spare God and Religion. The Men therefore you speak of are like blind *Bayard*, bold and dull ; and if they now and then happen upon something more than ordinary, who knows but the Devil may help them to it, who is always very ready to assist in this Case?

Therefore my good Friend, setting both these kinds of Men side, who are not the Copy, but the very Scandal of the Age they live in ; let us consider impartially what else there is, able to discourage such a Way of Conversing as we are upon. I have made it plain already, that all the Reason in the World is for it, and it is as certain that there are no Laws against it ; nor doth Authority so much as discountenance it in the least. Besides, there is, I am confident, as quick a Sense of Vertue and Piety in the present Times, as in the best Times of our Fore-fathers. And if there be some lewd and profligate Men against it ; yet there are others, and those of the best Quality, who think it so far from unbecoming their Rank, that nothing is more savory and acceptable to them than pious Discourse. And some of these, as I am informed, meet at one another Houses usually every Week, or as often

as their Occasions permit ; and there, whilst they walk in the Garden, or sit together by the Fire, (according as the Weather invites them) they make it their business to re-inforce upon one another's Minds the great Principles of Christianity, to affect their Hearts mutually with the Consequences of them. And when this is done, (they say) they return home as much raised in their Spirits, and cheered in their very Countenances, as the most jolly Good-Fellows do from their merry Assignations.

Phil. This is a pretty piece of News you tell me. But, I pray you, (by the way) Do you know any of these Men well? Are they not Conventiclers? I tell you plainly, I suspect, this Practice looks a-squint that way.

Sebast. No; very far from it, I assure you. Those I know of them are Persons most observant of the Laws of their Country, constant and devout Frequenters of their Parish-Church, true Friends of the Clergy, zealously affected towards the Common-Prayers, and all the Offices of the Liturgy ; and do as much abominate and discountenance every Instance of that factious, gadding, gossipping Pretence of Godliness, as any sort of Men whatsoever do, or ought to do ; but having a quick Sense of Piety, and a great Concern upon them for another World, they endeavour by the aforesaid Means to preserve and improve this Temper in themselves, and to propagate it to others : And this they do the more securely, as being condemned by no Law ; and the more innocently as condemning none of those that do not imitate them.

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But I do not mention this particular Club of Persons, with intention to make them a Precedent for all others ; for, besides that their Custom is only voluntarily taken up, and upon no apprehensions of any necessary Obligation upon them so to do ; for then it would be a great Burthen upon the Consciences of Men ; there are also several Inconveniences not unlikely to attend the Practice, if not prudently managed, which I need not name. That therefore which I aimed at in the mention of these Mens Usage, was (amongst other Proofs) to shew, that the World was not so abandoned of true Zeal and Piety as you suggested, that prophane Discourse hath not so universally obtained, nor that Godly Conference was so antiquated and exploded ; but that a Gentleman might still adventure to be found at it, without Impeachment of his Prudence or Dignity.

And moreover, I humbly conceive, that by how much the more there is of Truth in your Observation, by so much the more are all serious and sensible Men bound to put to their Endeavours to turn the Stream of Conversation from Froth and Folly to this great and important Concern. For, if this be out of fashion, the more is the shame ; and it is a thousand pities but that we should strive to bring it into fashion, if it were but to run down that prophane Humour you speak of : And especially to repair the Dishonour done to the Divine Majesty by those scurrilous Libertines, who, with equal Madnefs and Folly, let their Tongues run riot against him.

What!

What ! Shall we be Meally-mouthed in a good Cause, when they are impudent in a bad one ? Shall we be ashamed to own God, when they despise him ? Is God so inconsiderable a Being, that we dare not stand by him ? Are Piety and Vertue things to be blushed at ? Is eternal Salvation become so trivial a thing, that we should be unconcerned about it ? Do we yield the Cause to these half-witted Profligates ? Do we acknowledge the Gospel to be indeed ridiculous ? Or do we confess our selves the veriest Cowards in the World, and judge our selves unworthy of Eternal Life ? For shame, let us be so far from being either cow'd or byass'd by such Examples, that we resolve to make better where we cannot find them ? Why should we think so meanly of our selves, as to follow only, and not to lead ? In a word, Why may not we begin a good Fashion, rather than fall in with a bad one ?

*More Arguments
for Religious Con-
ference.*

Besides, I persuade my self, this will be no very hard thing to do, if we consider the Authority and Majesty of sincere and generous Piety, and the Guilt and Base-spiritedness of Vice and Prophaneness. If we be soft and timorous, that grows rampant and intolerable ; but if Vertue shine out in its own Rays, it dazles and baffles all those Birds of Night. If Men will be persuaded to assert their own Principles manfully, to talk of God worthily and courageously, the veriest Russians will presently be gagg'd and tongue-ty'd : As in Conjurations, (they say) name but God, and the Devil vanishes ; so enter resolutely into pious Conference,

and it will presently lay all the Oaths, and Blasphemies, and scurrilous Talk of those desperate Wretches.

And (by the way) that is the most genteel, and also the most effectual way of reproving that kind of Persons ; namely, to deal with them as Scholars deal by one another ; when any one speaks false Latin, they only repeat it after him in true Latin, and as it ought to be : So here, let us speak right Things of God when they speak amiss, and there needs no more to damp them ; they will either turn on your Side, and speak as you do, or leave the Field to you.

This, this, *Philander*, therefore is the only way to mend the World ; and without this, it will hardly ever be done. It is not good Books and Preaching that will retund a Prophane Humour ; for such Persons will either not read and hear them, or not consider them : Nor is it Prayer and Fasting too that will cast out this deaf (but not dumb) Devil. But when good Men are as bold as evil Men are impudent ; I mean, as openly good as the other are bad ; when Piety is daring, and (if you will pardon the Expression) Hectors Lewdneſs out of countenance ; then, I say, the World will, if not grow devout, yet, at least, grow modest and civil towards Religion. When vertuous Men give evidence that they believe themselves ; when they demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is not in Word only, but in Power ; when their Principles and Pretensions appear in their Spirit, their Discourses, their whole Life and Conversation ; when they continually breath of God, and of Heaven.

And

And (to say no more) by this Course also a Man shall gain a worthy Reputation and Esteem to himself: For, whereas a bashful, pusillanimous, complying Humour, that will crouch to a Debauch for fear of Offence, and falter and mince the Matter of Prophaneness to curry Favour with lewd Men, shall be despised and trodden down by every Body; a brave generous Asserter of his Principles and of God's Honour, that fills the Place and Company where he is with the sweet Odours of Piety and Devotion, procures himself a Veneration where-ever he goes; he looks like *Moses* when he came out of the Mount, his Face shines, and all Men see a Glory about him; insomuch that those that cannot find in their hearts to imitate him, yet cannot chuse but reverence and admire him.

Phil. I think your Mind is an inexhaustible Fountain of Arguments on this Subject: Every Occasion affords you a fresh Tide of Eloquence. Either you have very much studied this Point, or it is wonderfully pregnant of its own Proofs: for my own part, I cannot bear up against you. I confess, I thought, when we first entred on this Particular, it was impossible that I should ever be of your Opinion therein; but now I am so far from having any thing material to object, that I protest I am clearly satisfied that it would be a very wise Thing, and well worthy of our Endeavours, to bring it into Use and Practice: I mean, as much as possible we can, to exclude idle Tales and Drollery out of our Converse, or at least to confine them to a narrower compass, and so to make way for this great Affair of Religion.

But yet, let me tell you, though you have convinced me, you have not silenced others: There are those will elude the Arguments they cannot answer, and expose what they are resolved not to comply withal. They will say, This Talking of Religion is a Mountebank-Trick to impose upon the People; that it is a Design of Vain-glory, or an Artifice to seem better than we are. They will tell you, that sincerely good Men use to be modest and silent, and to enjoy their Sense of Piety in secret. In short, when you have said all you can to recommend this way of Conversation, they will say it is not better than Puritanism, or Phantasticism; and having affixed such a Name upon it, they will run both you and it down presently.

Sebast. Hearty Thanks, dear *Phil.* for putting me in mind of that Danger, which otherwise I should not have been aware of. I acknowledge I am so far unskill'd in the World, that I was apt to think it was sufficient to a Cause, to be back'd with good Proofs; and that when a Business had recommended it self to the Reason and Conscience of Men, the Work was done. I little thought Men must be wheedled into a Compliance with their own Judgments; and much less, that they would be so dis-ingenuous towards themselves, as to

*Godly Discourse
not Phanatical, nor
the Badge of any
Sect.*

put a Cheat upon their own Senses: nor did I sufficiently consider the power of Names, to make Good Evil, and Evil Good; and that the best Thing in the World may be run down by the meer Blast of an odious Nick-name. Lord! What a venomous

venomous Breath hath Common Fame, that it can change the Nature of Things? What an huge *Leviathan* is Vulgar Opinion, that it should be able to oppose it self to the best Reason of Mankind, and to God Almighty too? If this be so, who would exercise their Understandings, or dare to propound any generous Thing to the World; and not rather set himself a-drift, to run with the Tide?

But yet this comforts me, that it looks like a Confession of the insuperable Strength of my Arguments, when Men resort to such Subterfuges: It is a sign they dare not encounter me on the square, that use such foul Play; and that Men are destitute of Reason, when they betake themselves to Libels and Reproaches.

Let us then resume a little Courage; it may be we shall conquer at last, because our Adversaries despair of an honourable Victory. That which I contend for (you know) is this, That it becomes Men to take all fit and fair Occasions to speak worthily of God, and to make Advantage of friendly Conversation, towards the Improvement of one another in Morals, as well as in Secular, or any other Concerns: And can any one be so absurdly malicious, as to call this Phanaticism? Doth that deserve the odious Name of a Party, which is the great and universal Concern of all Mankind? Is that to be accounted the peculiar *Shibboleth* of a Sect, which speaks a good Man, and a Christian? Is that to be made a Mark of Infamy, which the best Men in the World wear as a Badge of Honour? Are we minded that this word Phanaticism should have the Power of an Ostracism, and put a Disgrace upon Men for being too good?

If Men, in their Intercourses and Communications, deliberated about setting forth of some new God, or at least of some new Religion, there were just Cause of such an odious Imputation: But to take an Opportunity to speak of the true God, and the old Religion, gravely and piously, it cannot be that this should be Puritanism, unless it be so to be in earnest in Religion, which God forbid. Sure it is not the Character of any mere Sect amongst us to love God; and if it be not, then neither can it be so to talk of him affectionately, since the latter is the easie and natural Issue and Expression of the former. *David*, I remember, call'd his Tongue his *Glory*: And is that alone, of all the Powers of Soul and Body, exempted from any Part in doing Honour to the Creator?

Are all Men Puritans when they are sick, or upon their Death-beds? and yet then there are very few are so modish as to wave the Talk of Religion, or to talk lightly and drollingly of it. Either therefore all dying Men are Sectaries, or else they teach us then what we ought to practise at other times, if we be not unreasonably careless and desperate.

As for those that are really Phanatick, and are continually canting in a loathsome manner of Religion, those Parrots, that talk without any Sense or Apprehension of what they say; or those Rickety Pharisees, that are all Head, and Ears, and Tongue, but feeble in their Hands and Feet; that talk, but do nothing; let these be called Puritans, or Phanaticks, or what Men please: But let no Dishonour be reflected upon those that understand and believe what they say, and live up to what they believe and profess.

For,

For, though it may please those who have a mind to put a Slur upon this Instance of real Piety which I am vindicating, to confound it with that other hypocritical Guise of it which I have now condemned, that so they may expose it to Contempt and Dishonour ; yet, as it is certain these two are as different Things as Sence and Nonsense, or as Life and Varnish, so (impartial Men being Judges) that very Paint and Pageantry bears Evidence of the Excellency of that Sincerity which I am recommending. For, you know, Men do not use to counterfeit that which is of no value. Painted Beauty is a great argument of the Desirableness of that which is true and native ; so there is certainly a very deserved Admiration of holy Discourse, and a great Power and Charm in it ; otherwise, it would never be so artificially pretended to by such Men, nor especially be sufficient to give countenance (as we find it doth) to their sinister Purposes and Designs. The World, I say, would not be so sottish, as to be imposed upon by Religious Cant ; nor designing Hypocrites to be so silly, as to go about to abuse the World this way, if it were not an acknowledged Case, that there is a real Worth in that which they endeavour apishly to imitate. So that the Objections against us are unanswerable Arguments for us ; and we have great Assurance we shall carry our Cause, when our very Reproaches turn to our Honour.

But what if, after all this,
Phil. I should take the boldness to assert, that such holy Intercourse as I am speaking of, and especially under those Conditions and

*Godly Conference
an effectual way
to supplant Phana-
ticism.*

Quali-

Qualifications I have put upon it, is so far from Phanaticism, or Puritanism, or any Sectarian *Odium*, that, on the contrary, (if the Practice of it became general amongst good Men) it would be the most effectual way in the World to dash those formal Disguises out of Countenance, and to put all Phanatical Tricks out of all Request and Reputation. This, I believe, will seem a Paradox to you at first; but I am very confident you will be of my mind when you have considered, that the only, or at least the principal Thing which that sort of Men support themselves by, is, the Gift of the Tongue, a peculiar Knack of Talking religiously: For if you look into their Lives and Temper, they have no Advantage of other Men; and if you examine either their Principles, or their Abilities, these will not mend the matter; and yet they have strange Authority and Influence in the World; they charm Men into Security of their Honesty by their Talk; they cast a Mist before Mens Eyes, that they are taken for Godly Men, let their Pride and Passion, their Covetousness and Ambition, be otherwise as palpable and notorious as they can. This Talent of Talking is so valuable, it redeems them from Suspicion; with this Pass-port they go undetected; they are Saints from the Teeth outwards, and Fools admire them; and so they compass their Ends.

Now, were all sincerely good Men so sensible of this as they ought to be, and would they in earnest apply themselves to grave, and serious, and pious Discourse in the Habit of their Conversations, these Jack-Daws would be deprived of their borrowed Feathers, and those crafty
Men

Men would not have a Mask or Vizard left them to cheat the World withal.

You will say, perhaps, they would outshoot those good Men in their own Bow, and talk at an higher rate in Hypocrisie, than the other could do in Sincerity. But for Answer : Do but consider whether there be not a greater Power in Life, than in mere Shew and Pageantry ; whether that which proceeds from the Thoughts, and Heart, and Principles within, be not likely to have more Vigour and Spirit, than that which hath no Root, no Foundation ; but is begotten, and lives, and dies between the Tongue and Teeth ? Do not you observe, that nothing so much disparages a Picture as the Presence of him for whom it was drawn ? Life hath a thousand Vigours and Beauties, which no Hand of the Painter can reach and display. So hath Spiritual Life, when it puts forth it self ; a Spirit, a Warmth, an Air, or whatsoever you will call it, which cannot be so imitated, but it will shame and detect the Rival. The great Mischief of the World therefore, and the only Security of Hypocrisie, is, that the Truth and Life disappears, and gives its Counterfeit the Stage entirely, to act upon ; but let that appear, and confront its Adversary, and Hypocrisie will be sensible of an unequal Match, and blush, or withdraw it self. When, I say, Men that feel the Power of Religion in their own Souls will be persuaded to express themselves habitually, manly and judiciously, they will baffle and confound all Theatrical Pretenders to Religion. And now, *Phil.* what is become of that formidable Objection, as you and I thought it at first ? May not we now adventure

venture to talk of Religion, without the Danger of Phanaticism ?

Phil. Yes, I see clearly we may ; and not only so, but you have now convinced me, that for that very Reason we ought to do it, as the best way to supplant Phanaticism. But at the worst, if there were some danger that I should incur the rash Censure of some that I value, and were likely to be called Phanatick for my pains, I would not stick to serve so many great and excellent Ends at that hazard, if I could.

Sebast. Bravely resolved, my good Friend ! Now you speak like a Man, and a Christian : There's the very Point of Vertue. He that is too tender and delicate, hath not the Courage to be good ; and he that will venture nothing here, will win nothing in the other World. You know my Sense already, that Good-nature is an excellent and useful Companion of Vertue ; but, as the Case may happen, a little Morosity is necessary to preserve them both. But, I pray you, why did you put an *if* at the last ? After all, Do you question whether it be possible to discourse piously ?

Phil. No, good *Sebastian*, that is not it ; for you have convinced me of the Feasibility, as well as the Excellency of that kind of Conversation : But you know (as I have said before) that is out of the Road of Discourse ; and besides the difficulty of bringing those one converses with to it, it is natural for a Man to follow his own Biass. If I were once entred into such a Communication, I am sure I should embrace it, and I think I could continue it. But there is a sheepish kind of Modesty in this, (as well as in other Things)
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that checks and restrains a Man from beginning that which neither he nor his Companions have been used to. If therefore you can help me to conquer my self, as well as to answer Objections; to overcome my Temper, as well as to submit my Judgment: I would then set about it as well as I could.

Sebast. With all my heart; only with this Condition, as well as I can, (as you say.) But, I pray give me leave to ask you a Question by the bye, and not decline that which you have put to me: The Case is this; It is commonly observed, that good Men find such a Modesty (as you speak of) to restrain them, when they are setting themselves to begin some good Discourse; insomuch that sometimes, with very great difficulty (if at all) they can screw themselves up to it: But contrariwise, lewd and prophane Men rant and hector at an intolerable Rate; they will blaspheme and burlesque Religion when they are in their humour, without regard to God and Man. Now seeing the former have all the Reason in the World on their side, and the other as much against them, what is it that makes this difference in their Spirit and Temper?

Phil. That I may come the sooner at the Solution of my own Difficulty, I will answer your Question as briefly as I can; and I think it may be resolved into these several Causes: First, Prophane Men are generally very grossly ignorant; for I cannot imagine that any thing else should make them bold with God Almighty. And tho' they pretend to Wit, yet a Man to their own Tooth

What makes prophane Men so bold in their Assaults upon Religion.

hath

hath told us, That a certain Dose of that Thing call'd Wit, is a necessary Ingredient into the Composition of a very ridiculous Fool. And I have heard it hath been said by a better Man than he, that a Smattering in Knowledge (which is the Measure of a Wit) disposes Men to Atheism; whereas a full Proportion would carry them through, to the Sense of God and Religion. The second Cause I assign, is, That these Men having abandoned Vertue, they have therewith lost all good Nature, and civil Respect; and are delivered up to Insolence, and an affronting Humour. And thirdly, I make no great doubt, but the Devil, whose work they do, assists them in it. And now you will easily think there needs no other Concurrence; yet I will add another, and that is Drunkenness: For methinks it should be out of the power of the Devil himself to tempt a sober Man to such a Villainy; but in the Rage of Drink, God is defied, and every thing that is sacred. But now to my Question.

Sebast. First, *Phil.* let me kiss your Hands for your ingenious Answer to my Query; and then, in the second place, I wish I could answer yours as well. The plain truth is, (as I have acknowledged to you before) I have been in that Oven, and therefore cannot wonder to find another Man there; and though I cannot always conquer my Bashfulness, yet in such Cases I always endeavour it, and I will tell you by what Methods; and so I hope the same Remedies may relieve us both.

First then, when I enter into Company, with design to engage them in good Discourse, I endeavour,

deavour, if it be possible, to make some Friend privy to my Plot, who perhaps shall sit at some distance from me, but understanding his Cue, shall be always ready to second me in what I undertake; and so by an honest Confederacy, we can carry on the Business. And this I do especially, if I apprehend the Company to consist either of prophane Persons, or captious Wits. For if a modest Man should, in such a case, begin an unusual Discourse, and have no body to follow him, he will not only miscarry of his Purpose, but be ashamed and confounded. But if he have one prepared to comply with him, they shall both have Time to recollect themselves, and to carry the Ball of Discourse whither they please.

In the next place, When I am destitute of the assistance of such an Associate to second and relieve me, then, if I apprehend I have an opportunity of discoursing usefully, I resolve to begin, whatever come of it; that is, I forcibly break silence, though it be with Trembling, and Paleness, and Faultring, and without any well-contrived Expressions: And when once the Ice is broken, the worst is past; then presently my Colour, and Speech, and Spirits will return again. For to proceed is very easie then, because, as I have noted before, the Objects of Religion lie so ready to a Man's Thoughts, that he cannot be at a loss in the sequel of his Discourse.

*Means to raise
our Spirits to a fit
Temper for Reli-
gious Communica-
tion.*

In order hereto, I endeavour to raise in my own Heart a great Zeal of God's Glory, and a generous Design of doing Good to those I converse

verse with : And therefore I think with my self, I am not only to stand upon my Guard, and secure my self from Infection ; nor much less to be a mere Negative, and content my self to do no hurt to my Acquaintance ; but that it is expected from me, I should benefit them, and season their Intercourse with something virtuous and graceful.

Moreover, I endeavour in the whole Conduct of my self, and the Habit of my Life, to arrive at a Seriousness of Spirit, and a Deepness of Thought ; without which, neither shall I be in Temper to begin or carry on any such weighty Discourse with others, nor will they expect it from me : A light, trifling, jesting Spirit is good for nothing but sport and may-game. Such as can ordinarily find in their hearts to step aside to a Quibble, or a Clinch, are generally Men so unfit for Religion, that they are seldom useful to themselves in any Secular Business : But a serious Man hath his Thoughts about him, and his very Mien and Countenance raises the Expectation of the Company, and so they are half prepared to receive his Impressions. Now, to bring my self to this Temper, I often represent to my self God's Omnipresence ; and that I am before a Mighty, Wise, and most Reverend Majesty, who takes notice of all my Carriage and Demeanour. I think frequently of the Judgment to come, and the wonderful Accuracy and Solemnity of it ; of the unspeakable Concerns of Hell and Heaven, and the whole Affair of another World. By these Considerations I curb the Levity and Wantonness of my Spirit, and so become both furnished with-fit Thoughts to communicate.

municate, and also with a proper Temper to communicate them.

Besides this, I make it my earnest Endeavour to be as much above the World as I can; I mean, to have as indifferent an Esteem of Riches and Fame, &c. as is possible, that my Heart may not eagerly and intently run upon them; for I find by woful Experience, that whensoever it warps that way, I am sure to be listless and formal in any such Enterprize as we are speaking of: But whensoever I can condemn them, then I am, as it were, all Spirit, and have so lively Impresses of another World upon me, that I can almost make it visible to my Companions.

Amongst all these, I pray daily and earnestly for God's Grace and Assistance, that he will every where be present to me by his Holy Spirit, and put useful Thoughts into my Heart, and give me Courage to express them so, as to beget the like in others.

This, Sir, is the Method I take with my self; and having, I thank God, often succeeded well with it, against a cowardly Heart of my own, I cannot but expect it will have greater and more signal effects upon you.

Phil. God verifie the Omen. However, I thank you most heartily for the Receipt, which I will keep as long as I live.

Sebast. But, I pray, good *Phil.* do not make it publick; for though I envy no body the Benefit of my Experience, yet I would be loth the World should know what a shameful Disease I have been sick of.

Phil. O Sir, Timidity is but a Natural Infirmary, and hath not much Shame attending it; But I must tell you, as my Confessor, or Physician

cian, which you will, of another Disease I labour under, so shameful and scandalous, that scarce any body will own it ; and that is, Ignorance : If I had Courage enough for the Business (we have all this while been speaking of,) yet I am afraid by my Unskilfulness I shall spoil all : Let me therefore pray you to afford me your Advice in this Case also.

Sebast. Fear it not, *Phil.* A Man of your chearful Countenance, sprightly Vigour, and Benignity of Temper, can never labour under any such Disease.

Phil. Good *Sebastian* be not too secure of me ; for this is a Business of that nature, that unless it be done gracefully, it had better be let alone, and especially because the Enterprize is somewhat new and unusual ; therefore the greater Dexterity and Management is required, to give it a good Appearance at its Setting out, and so to lay a Foundation for its coming into common Use and Reputation. And besides, it concerns you, in point of your own Credit, to furnish me out well ; for seeing it is you only that have put me upon it, the Dishonour will redound to you, if I miscarry in the Undertaking.

Sebast. In earnest, Sir, and without a Complement, you are known to be a Man of so good Parts, that you can never want Materials ; and then, your sweetness of Address will not fail to give great Advantage and Acceptation to your Discourses. Now it is an hard thing, that because you are pleased to think me wise, therefore I must shew my self to be a Fool ; but that's a small matter between Friends : Therefore, since you will have it so, I will tell you the Effect of my Observation in this Matter.

And

And the first thing to our purpose which I remark, is, the Example of our Saviour, (and who can we better learn of?) And he, I observe, had a Dexterity of applying every accidental Occurrence to his holy Purposes, as it were by a kind of Chymistry separating the gross Matter, and subliming ordinary Affairs to Heavenly Doctrine. Inasmuch, that there was scarcely any common Affair of Life, such as Eating or Drinking, or Recreation; no Disease or Infirmary of the Body, no Trade and Occupation, such as Merchandize or Husbandry; no Building or Planting, Plowing or Sowing; nay, not so mean Employments as Women's Leavening their Bread, Grinding at the Mill, or Sweeping of an House, but he Spiritualized them, and applied them to his Designs.

Prudential Advices about Religious Conference.

Now, if we would learn of him, and endeavour to imitate this Dexterity, we might with great Ease, and without all Violence, surprize Men into Religion: and not only at every turn introduce pious Discourse, but render the Subject of it intelligible to the meanest Capacities; and withal, by those sensible resemblances, give such lively Touches upon the Minds of Men, as that what we delivered upon those Occasions would stick and remain with them.

And there is no great Pains or Skill required for the doing of this; the principal requisite to it, is, a Zeal of God's Glory, and such a constant and fixed Eye upon it as shall make us apprehensive of the Opportunities that present themselves, and then a little Humility to condescend to the Weakness of People; Which two things

pre-supposed, a very small Exercise of Fancy would draw the Parallels, and make the Application; as any Man will quickly find, that will set himself about it.

As for Instance, When we visit a sick Friend or Neighbour, what a fair Opportunity have we to discourse of the Immortality of the Soul? And what an easie Transition is it, from a Physician, to a Saviour? Or why may we not as well chear up our afflicted Friend with the Comforts of Religion, as well as amuze or divert him with impertinent Stories? Or, Suppose Friends be together, and disposed to be merry, why may not some Word come in seasonably of the Everlasting Friendships in Heaven, or of the continual Feast of a good Conscience? Why may not the common Chat about News be elevated to the Consideration of the good Tidings of the Gospel? What hinders, but our Dishes of Meat may be seasoned with a gracious Word or two about the Food of our Souls? When Men are talking of Old Age, it would be no great Strain if thence our Thoughts rise up to Eternal Life. Nor any great flight of Fancy is requisite to improve all the Accidents of our Lives to the Contemplation of Divine Providence, which orders and governs them. In a word, Every thing is capable of Improvement, if we be not wanting; we shall never want Opportunity, if we embrace it; any thing will serve an intent Mind, and a devout Heart, to these Purposes.

My second Remark is, upon the Custom of those several Persons in the Gospel, that upon divers Occasions entred into Conference with our Saviour; which, I note, they always began by way

way of Question, or Doubt ; as Men desirous to be informed, rather than affecting to teach or dictate. This was not only the Way of *Nicodemus*, *Joh. iii.* of the Woman of *Samaria*, *Joh. iv.* and of the young Rich Man, *Matth. xix.* who came in earnest to be instructed ; but of the Scribes and Pharisees, and Sadduces, who came to dispute. And indeed, I have heard, this modest Way of propounding a Question, and expecting and replying to the Answer, was the old Way of Disputation. And certainly this is of great use in our Case, for the more easie and acceptable Introduction of the serious Matters of Religion into ordinary Conversation. When we do not violently break in upon the Company, but civilly make our Way ; not abruptly obtrude our Sentiments, but insinuate them ; not malapertly reprove other Mens Errours, or superciliously dictate our own Opinions ; not fall upon Preaching, or throw down our Gauntlet, and challenge the Company to a Combat ; but modestly appear in the Garb of Learners, and propound a Case, as to Men wiser than our selves, for our own Satisfaction. This Course, instead of offending, exceedingly obliges those we apply our selves to ; forasmuch as every Man is glad to be accounted wise, and fit to be consulted with.

As, suppose you should ask the Persons you are with, what they think of such or such an Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, or for the Proof of a particular Providence ; or ask their Advice how to answer such an Objection that comes in your way against either of those, or any other fundamental Point of Religion : And though such Questions may at first seem

merely speculative, yet, if they be pursued wisely, and with that Intention, they will infallibly lead to Practice.

Or, Suppose you put a Case about Temperance ; as, namely, What are the Rules and Measures of Sobriety, so as also to avoid Scrupulosity ? How far is Worldly Care evil and vicious, and how far innocent and allowable ? What is the Predicament of Carelesness and common Swearing, and what kind of Sins it is reducible to ?

Or more generally, How a Man may discern his own Proficiency in Vertue ; and what Preparation of a Man's self is flatly necessary against the Uncertainty of Life, and to secure the great Stake of an Interest in another World ?

Or, to name no more, What the Company thinks of such or such a Passage in a Sermon you lately heard, or in such a Book ? These, and a Thousand more such easie Inlets there are into good Discourse, without Imputation of Pragmaticalness, and which a little Presence of Mind will improve to what Purposes we desire.

Another thing that I have observed, in order to this Affair, is, what I have learned from the Custom of prudent Men ; to insinuate that by a Story, which would not be so well received if it were directly and bluntly delivered. Telling of Stories, you know, is a common Theme of Conversation ; and if a Man have any graceful Way of telling them, and especially use any Prudence in the Choice of them, he hath the Company in his power, and may lead them to what Discourse he will. And besides, Men will admit of that to be said in the Third Person, which they will not bear in the Second.

Now,

Now, to this purpose, Suppose a Man should have in readines a Story of some remarkable Judgment of God upon some notorious Sin, that he would by any means deterr those he converses with from, no body could take Offence at the Story, and yet every Man's Conscience would make Application of it. Or, Suppose a Man should, in lively Colours, describe some excellent Person; he would not only put all the Hearers into the Thoughts of those Vertues that were so described, but stir up jointly a modest Shame in them for their own Shortness, and an Emulation of so brave an Example. But, to be sure, he shall hereby give himself an Introduction (without Affectation) of discoursing of which soever of those eminent Vertues he pleases. These, and many such other Ways there are, which your own Prudence and Observation will represent to you better than I can; by which a discreet Person may engage any Company (in which it is fit for an honest Man to be found) in good Discourse.

But I will not omit, upon this Occasion, to tell you a Story which I have from very good Hands, of two very eminent Men, both for Learning and Piety, in the last Age, (or rather the beginning of the present) the one of them a great Prelate (indeed a Primate,) and the other a Church-man of great Note and Preferment. These two great Men, as they often met together to consult the Interest of Learning, and the Affairs of the Church; so when they had dispatched that, they seldom parted from one another without such an Encounter as this; "Come, good Doctor, (*saith the Bishop*) let us now talk a little of Jesus Christ. Or, on the

other side, said the Doctor, "Come, my Lord, let me hear your Grace speak of the Goodness of God, with your wonted Piety and Eloquence; Let us warm one another's Hearts with Heaven, that we may the better bear this cold World. I cannot tell you the Words that passed between them, nor can you expect it from me; but I am sufficiently assured of the Matter of Fact. And this they performed with that holy Reverence, and ardent Zeal, with that delightful Sense and Feeling, that afforded Matter of Admiration to those of their Friends or Servants that happened to be present, or to overhear them. Here is now an Example of holy Conference, without a Preface, and yet without Exception; A Precedent, not only justifying all I have said, but easie to imitate where-ever there is a like Spirit of Piety. A few such Men would put Prophaneness out of Countenance, and turn the Tide of Conversation.

Phil. Shall I crave of you to tell me the Names of those two Persons?

Sebast. Their Names are so well known, that I think you might spare the Question: But they were V—— and P——

Phil. I guess who you mean, and I would to God there were more of them. I doubt I shall never be able to imitate; but I am resolved to write after so fair a Copy as well as I can: Therefore I pray you, if you have any further Directions for the guiding of my Hand, let me have them.

Sebast. I see you are in earnest; God's Blessing on your Heart for it. All that I have to say, or (as I think) can be said more, may be summed up in these following Cautions.

First,

First, You must remember, that (which was said before) you are not always to be endeavouring a Discourse of Religion; other Discourse, so it be manly and pertinent, is not only lawful, but necessary in its season. The Wise Man tells us, there is a time for all things: To overdo, is to do nothing to the purpose; and to exclude all other innocent and ingenious Converse, for the sake of Religion, is to make Religion irksome, and the certain way to shut it quite out of the World.

Secondly, Because Religious Conference is not always a Duty, therefore it is a peculiar Season and Opportunity that makes it at any time become so; and consequently, that is to be watched, and laid hold upon. My meaning is, That when Men are in Drink, or in Passion, it is no fit Time to enter on this Subject, for it will be but to cast Pearls before Swine; it can do those Persons no good ut such Times, and it may do us hurt, and Religion too. But when Men are in the calmest and soberest Moods, then is the only Time for this Intercourse.

Thirdly, It is very advisable, that we make a Distinction of Persons, as well as Times, for this Business. You know the World is not all of a Size; some are our Superiors, others are our Inferiors, or Equals; there are some very acute and learned Men, some dull and ignorant; some are captious, others sincere and plain-hearted; some prophane, and others pious: In a word, there are Old and Young, Rich and Poor, Cheerful and Melancholy, and abundance other such Differences in Mens Circumstances: All which require a peculiar Address, if we intend to fasten any good thing upon them. But
of

of this I need say no more, knowing to whom I speak.

Again, Fourthly, It is a Matter of Prudence, that our Essays of this kind be rather perfective, than destructive ; that is, that we do not take upon us, authoritatively to quash and controll other Discourse ; but rather take advantage of any occasional Passages and Hints, from whence to improve and raise it insensibly to that we would be at.

Lastly, That out of Indulgence to the Levity, and in Compliance with the Curiosity of Mens Minds, we should not always harp upon one string ; but sometimes designedly lay aside our Business, and then resume it again ; as in Musick, to sing and let fall a Note, and by and by get it up again ; that by such Variety we may afford the more delightful Entertainment to those that are our Companions. And now, I doubt, I have quite tired you ; therefore it is time to bid you a Good-night.

Phil. Dear *Sebastian*, shall I tell you a plain Truth ? When we first came together this Evening, your Conversation methought was so much out of the Mode, that though I consider'd you as an honest Gentleman, yet I suspected I should have uneasy Company with you : But now I fancy you are like some of those old stately Buildings I have seen; which are a little rough and weather-beaten without ; but for all that, are substantially strong, and express very admirable Art within : Or, as I have heard it was said of *Socrates*, that he was like Apothecaries Boxes, that had the Picture of an Ape, a Satyr, or perhaps a Serpent without side, but contained excellent Medicaments. So you, that I feared would

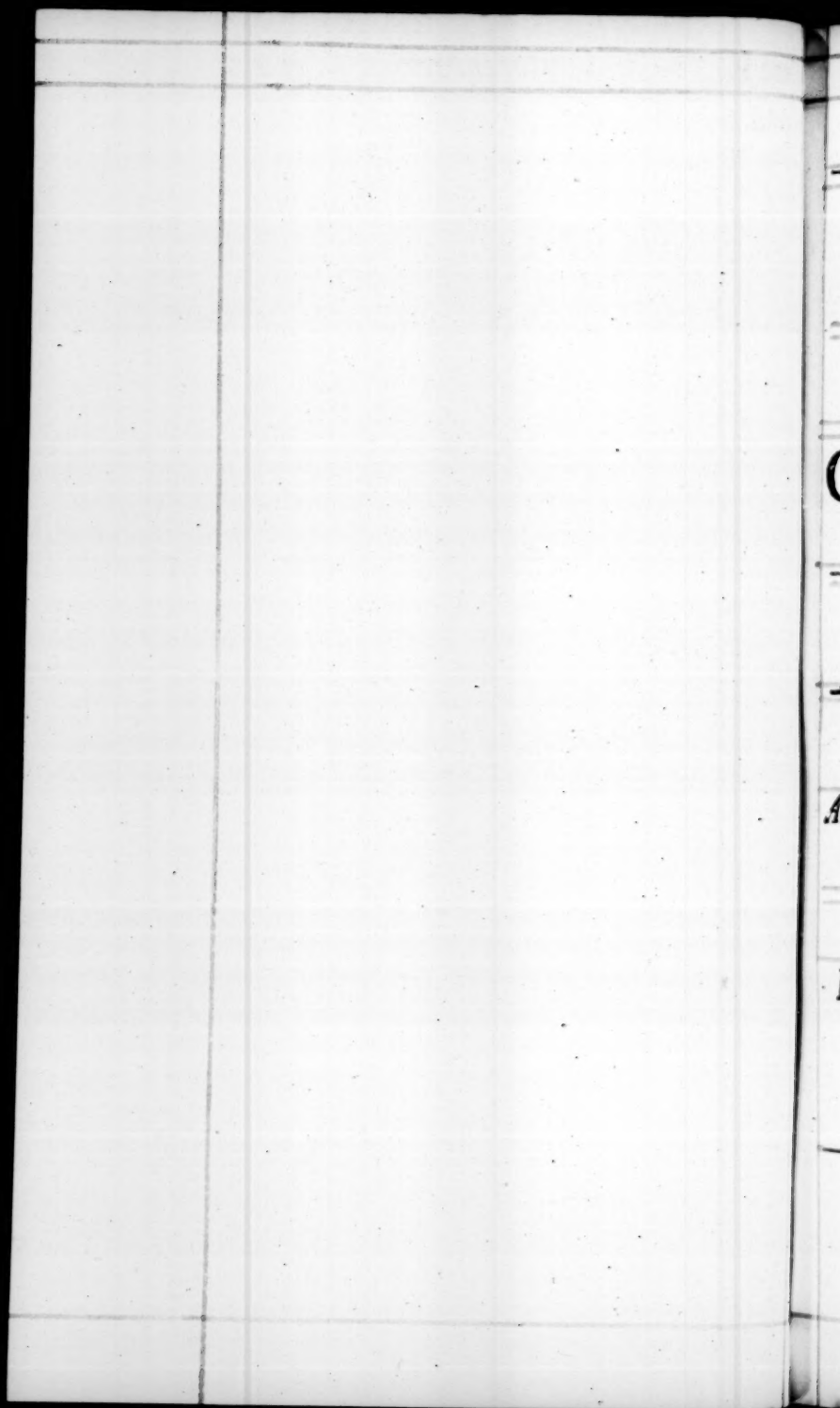
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would be my Disease, have been my Physician; and, which is more, have set me up for one too.

Sebast. Nay then, Good-night again, if you be for Complements: But if you have any real value for me, I hope you will now do me the favour of your Company at my House some other Evening.

Phil. Never doubt it, Sir; your dead Men shall scarcely haunt you more than I will do. But Good-night heartily.

The End of the First Conference.



A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE.

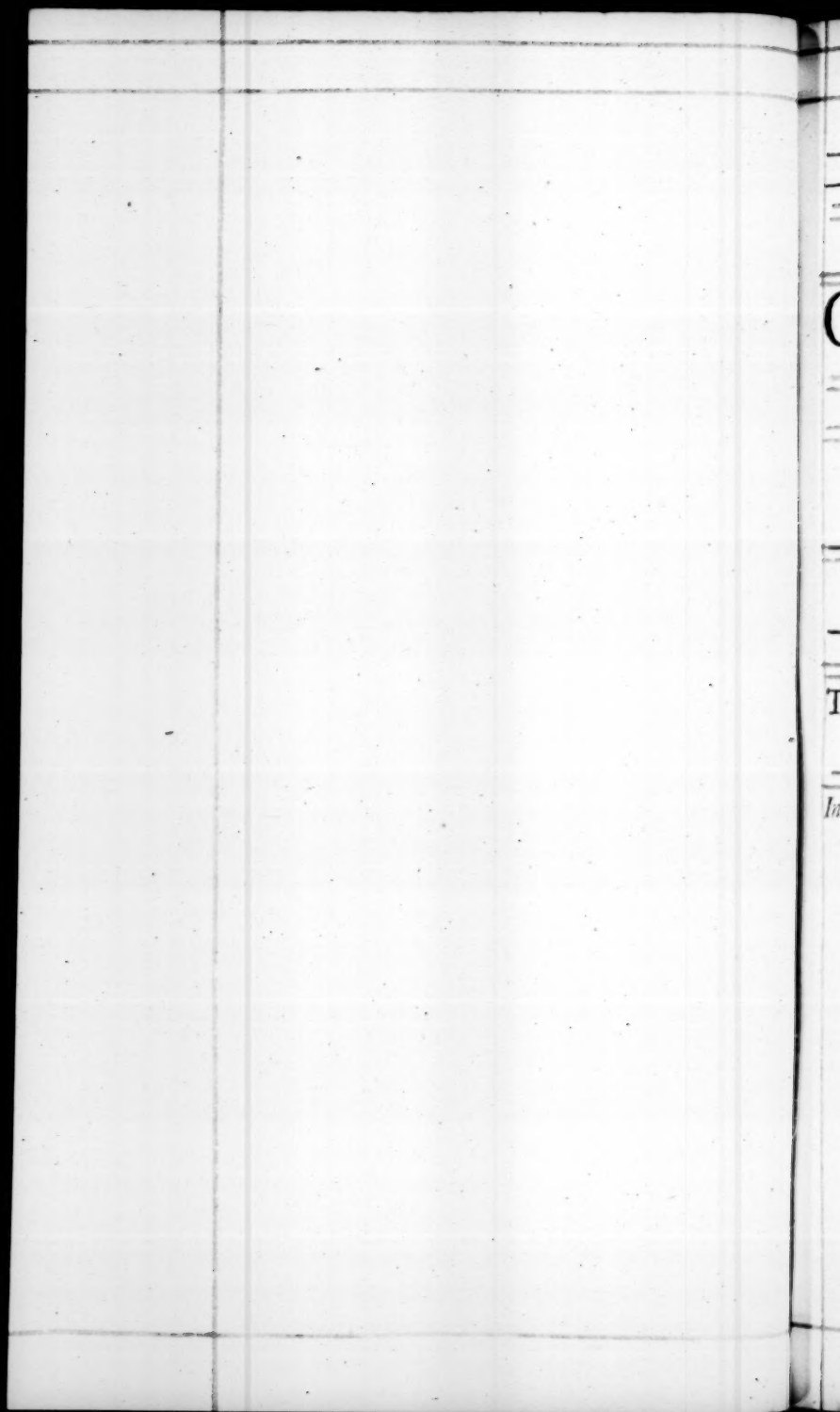
PART II.

PROV. xxvii. 17.

*As Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the
Countenance of a Man his Friend.*

I COR. xv. 33.

*Evil Communications corrupt good
Manners.*



A
CONFERENCE

A T
SEBASTIAN'S House.

PART II.

The ARGUMENT of the Second
CONFERENCE.

In the former Conference, Sebastian having convinced Philander of the great Importance of Religion, and the Wisdom of making it as well the Subject of Social Communication, as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpose this second time to conferr about it. But Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, being in their Company, he at first diverts them from their Design by other Discourse; till after a while, under the disguise of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the Proof of those Principles which they would have supposed. Upon this Occasion the Foundations of Religion are searched into; and particularly, that great Point concerning a Judgment to come, is substantially proved.

proved. Which being done, and Biophilus thereby rendred somewhat more inclinable to be serious, they then pursue their first Intentions, and discourse warmly and sensibly of another World, and of the necessary Preparations for it, so long, till they not only inflame their own Hearts with Devotion, but strike some sparks of it into Biophilus also.

Philander. **Y**OU see, *Sebastian*, I am as good as my Promise ; and at this time so much better, as I have brought my Neighbour *Biophilus* along with me.

Sebastian. I always took you for a Man of your Word ; but now you have not only acquitted your self, but obliged me.

Biophilus. Your humble Servant, good *Sebastian* : I know you are a studious Person, yet I thought Company would not be unacceptable to you at this season.

Sebast. You are heartily welcome, Sir : I love my Books well, but my Friends better. Come, Gentlemen, will it please you to draw near the Fire ? The Weather is very sharp still.

Phil. The Cold continues ; but, thanks be to God, the Evenings are not so tedious since I saw you last.

Bioph. How can that be, *Philander* ? The Weather, indeed, may change on a sudden, and become colder, or warmer, upon several Accidents ; but seeing the Sun keeps his constant Course, the *Interim* of a few Days can make no discernible difference in the Length or Shortness of the Evenings.

Phil. Oh, but here is a Friend hath taught me an Art for that, a Way to make Time longer or shorter

shorter, at pleasure; nay, (which perhaps will increase your *Wonder*) both these seeming Contraries shall be co-incident. A Man shall have more Time to spend, and less to spare; more for his Use and Pleasure, and none to be a Burthen to him.

*Of Improvement
of Time.*

Bioph. Can Art do that? That is a noble Skill indeed, (if it be possible;) to shorten a Man's Time, and yet prolong his Life. Sure you speak Riddles: However, I pray, make me partaker of the Mystery.

Phil. Good Neighbour, there is no other Secret in it but this: Good Company and profitable Conversation redeem Time from Folly and Impertinency; and so we really live longer, and they also spend the Time very pleasantly; and so our Lives seem to be the shorter.

Bioph. That's pretty, I confess; but I had rather it had been literally true.

Sebast. I believe *Biophilus* remembers a Proverbial Saying they have in *Italy* to this purpose, *He that would have a short Lent, let him borrow Money to be re-paid at Easter.* So he that forecasts the Account which every Man must one Day make, how he hath expended the Time of this Life, will not be apt to think the Term of it to be over-long. And he, on the other side, who improves his Time as he ought, and hath his Accounts in readiness, will not think the Day of Reckoning too soon, or sudden.

Bioph. Very good again: But, nevertheless, with your Pardon, Gentlemen, I should argue the quite contrary from your Premises. For, if there be a Judgment to come, (as you are

A Touch of Epicurean Doctrine.

I

pleased

pleased to suppose) and that a Man must render an Account of all his Actions another Day; this, methinks, should curdle all his Delights; and the very thoughts of such a Thing filling him with perpetual Fears and Sollicitude about it, must needs make Life very tedious to him. But if there be no such Thing to be feared hereafter, then Life will seem short, because it will be sweet and comfortable: And then also a Man shall, in effect, live a great while in a little time, when there is nothing to disturb his Thoughts, to impeach his pleasures, or interrupt the Enjoyment of himself.

Phil. Yes, even in the Case which you put, Death will be sure to come shortly, and that will spoil his Sport.

Bioph. That is very true, and very sad: If therefore you could find out a Remedy for that, you would do something to purpose. But when as you cannot but observe that there are several sorts of Brute Creatures that out-live Mankind, (I mean, tho they know not what it is to live, yet) they continue longer in the World, and have as well a quicker Sense of Pleasure, as a more unlimited and *uncontrolled Enjoyment* of it; in both which Respects we have too great Cause to envy their Happiness. If Mankind, after all this, must be perpetually tormented too with Suspensions of what may come after, they are doubly miserable, and under the hardest Fate of all Creatures.

Sebast. That very Thing which you now observe, is to me a very great Argument of what you oppose. For, upon those very Considerations, *viz.* that the Life of Man in this World is shorter than that of some other less considerable Creatures,

Creatures, and that the pleasure thereof is interrupted also by the Expectation of the future; upon those very Grounds (say I) there is great Reason to believe that there is such a Thing as another World, wherein he may have Amends made him for whatever was amiss, or defective here. For it is not credible with me, that such Power and Wisdom as is plainly displayed in the Constitution of Man, should be so utterly destitute of Goodness, as to contrive Things so ill, that the noblest Being should be finally the most unfortunate.

To which I must add, That therefore the Apprehension of such a Judgment to come as we speak of, neither is, nor can be mere Matter of Dread and horror, (as you seem to suppose;) but is either terrible or comfortable, respectively to Men's Preparations for it. I cannot wonder if the Thoughts

Of the different Prospects different Men have of the other World.

of it do so fright and discompose Evil Men, so that they could with all their Hearts wish there was no such Thing. But, must certainly, to wise and vertuous Men, it is so far from being formidable, that contrariwise, the Hope of it is the very Joy of their Hearts; the Support of their Spirits, their greatest Security against all the cross Accidents of this World, and, in a Word, their Port and Sanctuary.

Biop's. These are fine Sayings, *Sebastian*; but when you have said all you can, and made the best of the Case, when it comes to the Proof, I do not find Men in love with Dying, nor to have so comfortable an Opinion of that other World you speak of; but that they could, with all their Hearts, be content to quit their Interest

in the latter, so they might put off the former. I remember once when I was present at an Execution, amongst the rest of the condemned Malefactors, there was one who either was so secure of his one Innocency, or so confident of the Sufficiency of his preparations for Death, or, which I rather suspect, so elevated and transported with the Harangues of the Priest, that he seem'd to long for his near-approaching End, and pretended he would not exchange his Condition for that of any of the Spectators there present : But by and by comes the surprizing News of a Pardon or Reprieve, and the poor Man was ready to leap out of his Skin for Joy.

And I have often observed Men, who when they have been desperately sick, and past all hopes of Life, then (as it is usual with Men in danger of drowning to catch hold of any thing that offers it self for their Support) to set a good Face on the Matter, and (as we say) make a Vertue of Necessity, and welcome the Approach of Death with seeming Courage and Constancy : But in this Juncture, let but a Physician appear that gives them any Hopes of Recovery, they presently start back from the brink of another World, as from an horrible Precipice, and smile upon the Messenger that brings the good Tidings of Life. I cannot see therefore that Men do, indeed, believe themselves in this Matter.

Sebast. There is no doubt, *Biophilus*, but that (as you say) some Men may talk only, and set a good Face upon that which they have no comfortable Sense of: And no wonder if such Men's Courage fails them when they have most use of it; for it is not imaginable that it should be easie
to

to brazen it out against Death. But this is no more Reproach to true Faith in God, and Hopes of another World, than it is to generous Courage and Valour, that now and then you shall see an huffing, swaggering Hector turn Recreant when he is put to it in earnest. It is acknowledged to be very easie to brag and vapour when no Danger is near; but it requires real Bravery to stand to it when a Man is briskly encountered: Now, as you will not say there is no such thing as Valour, because there are some Cowards that pretend to it; so neither (I presume) will you think fit to suppose there is no Faith, because there is some Hypocrisy.

Besides, If you were as well satisfied as I am, or pretend to be, of the Truth of that we are discoursing upon, namely, of another World; yet your Experience of the common Course of Men's Lives would force you to acknowledge, that even amongst those that do profess to believe such a Thing, there are but very few who appear to be habitually well prepared for so great a Trial; and therefore no wonder if such Persons be somewhat startled and discomposed at an immediate Summons, and could be very glad to have further Day given them to make up so great an Account. For, however, a tolerable Course of Living may make a shift to support a Man's Hopes, whilst Death is looked upon at a distance; yet when it comes to the Point, that a Man must die indeed, it is very reasonable to expect, that such Men we now speak of, should be not a little solicitous in such a Concern, where they know the Miscarriage is fatal, and the best Provision possible will be little enough.

But notwithstanding all this, there are certainly, and have been, fundry Persons in the World, who tho they have had the same Natural Affection to themselves, and to the present Life with others, yet have as heartily wished and longed for the Great Day, as it was lawful for them to do. They know it is their Duty to maintain the Station God has set them in, till they have a fair Dismission, but bating that Consideration, I doubt not but many a good Man would sue out his *Quietus est*, and gladly embrace an Opportunity of bidding Farewel to the World.

Bioph. You say well : But how shall this Case be decided? Where may a Man find any such Person as you speak of?

Sebast. Perhaps you have not heard any Man sing his *Nunc dimittis*; or if you had, it may be you would not have believed him to be in ear-

*Heroes that can
despise Death.*

nest: But what think you of St. Paul, who professes, *he desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*? And particularly, *2 Tim. iv. 7.* he foresees a violent Death approaching him, and upon that Occasion, he by way of Contemplation, places himself as it were, upon a Promontory, where he could look backward and forward, and take a View of both Worlds; and when he reflects upon that which he was leaving, he finds that he had discharged his Part well and worthily whilst he was in it; *I have fought the good Fight, (saith he) I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith.* But then, when he looks forward, and takes a Prospect of what was to come, here he triumphs and exults with Joy; *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness,*

ness, which God the Righteous Judge shall give me.

As if he had said, "I know no Cause that I should either be ashamed to live, or afraid to die: I have no Reason to be very fond of Life, who have met with so many Afflictions in it; yet I that have born them so undauntedly hitherto, can have as little Reason to leave the World now in a Pet of Impatience: But, upon the whole Matter, I see great Advantage on the other Side; and the other World is as much better than the present, as Harvest is than Labour, as Victory than Battle; and as being at home, than in Travel, and on a Journey.

Or what do you think of so many Thousand Martyrs, who have not only gone out of the World with Smiles in their Faces, and Songs in their Mouths, but have chosen Death when they might have lived as freely, as happily, and as long as other Men: They were not worn out with Age, nor vexed and wearied with Poverty, nor distracted by any Disaster; they had as tender and sensible Constitutions as other Men, as much Natural Affection to themselves, and as sound Reason to judge what was best; and yet despised the present Life and World, in comparison of that to come.

Bioph. Nay, as for those Men of old, which you speak of, I cannot tell what to make of them: but I would fain see such a Man now.

Sebast. I make no Question but I could direct you to such Men now; but it may be you will not believe they despise Death, because you see them yet living. However, What think you of the Man that hath the Bravery to deny himself those Profits and pleasures which other Men al-

low themselves, (so long as they see no Infamy or External Danger attend them?) What think you of the Man that dares to be vertuous in a lewd Age; and in evil Company; and hath the Courage and Prowess to confront a whole *World* with his Example? What think you of the Man that sits so loose to the *World*, that he can bear Prosperity without being supercilious, and Adversity without being dejected; that can be in want without repining, and can be liberal without upbraiding? Or, to say no more, What think you of the Man that scorns to crouch and sneak, and parasitically to humour and flatter others, for his Secular Interest or Security? Such Men as these are to be found in the present Age: And where-ever you find any such Man, assure you self, there is a Person that believes himself, or rather, that believes in God; and hath as real a Persuasion of the *World* to come, as other Men have of that which they see with their Eyes, and touch with their Fingers.

Bioph. I believe there are some such Men as you speak of; and I do account them brave and worthy Persons: But these Instances come not up to the Point, forasmuch as some of these will quail at the Approach of Death, as well as other Men.

Sebast. It may happen so, that a vertuous Man may be a little discomposed at the rude Assaults of Death, and yet without any Blemish either to his Faith or Vertue: For, in the first place, you know all Men have a natural Love of Life, and an Abhorrence of Death; and from hence may proceed some sudden Reluctances, because it is neither within the power of Reason, nor is it the Office of Religion, utterly to exterminate

exterminate and extinguish these first Motions; but to subdue and govern them, so as that a Man may (after some Conflict) pursue the Choice of his Mind notwithstanding them; and this latter you shall see them perform.

And then, besides; you know there are some Men of more timorous Natures than others; insomuch that a great Measure of Vertue will not do the same Thing in such, as a lesser Proportion, assisted by Hardiness of Temper, will do in others: For Nature will be Nature still; and therefore you shall observe, that even amongst those that have no Apprehension of any thing to come after Death, (if we may believe themselves) and so consequently can have no Cause of Fear; yet will be found those that are as timorous as those that expect a Judgment to come. Witness your Friend Mr. H.

Moreover, you cannot but be aware that a violent Disease, or Pain, or any of those Fore-runners of Death, do ordinarily infeeble the Operations of the Mind, as well as of the Body; and disorder Men's Reason so, that it is hard to pronounce of Men's Prowess by the Combat they then maintain: Therefore the surest Way of deciding this Matter is, that which I directed you to before; namely, when you see a Man in his full Strength, voluntarily and understandingly, do that which will certainly draw *Death* after it; this hath certainly more Bravery and Self-denial in it, more Contempt of Life and the World, and more Argument of Hopes in another World, than can be drawn from the Contingences in the very Agony of Death.

Bioph. Well, perhaps it may be so: But for God's sake, Gentlemen; let us wave this uncomfortable-

*Of News; and
News-mongers ex-
posed.*

comfortable Subject. Come,
What good News is there stir-
ring?

Phil. O Sir, that is a prohibited Commodity
you enquire for; neither of us deal in it.

Bioph. Nay, truly, for my part, I wish it had
been prohibited sooner; for there hath been so
much Knavery and Sophistication in it, that se-
veral well-meaning Men have been cheated of
their Peace, thair Loyalty, and almost out of
their Wits too by it.

But so long as we are not bound to believe all
that we hear, we may hear what Men talk of,
for our Diversion.

Sebast. Hearing and telling of News seems to
me to be just such another Diversion as Tipling
is: And it is much the same thing whether a
Man's Head be full of Vapours, or of Proclama-
tions: Wind in the Brain makes Men giddy, as
well as Wine; and Men reel and stagger to and
fro as unseemly by the Impulse of uncertain Ru-
mours, as those that are intoxicated with the
strongest Liquors. Besides, just as he that knows
not how to entertain himself at home, usually
applies himself to the Tavern, or the Ale-house,
for his Relief; so it is the Custom of idle People,
and such as are negligent of their own Affairs,
to busie themselves in Matters that do not be-
long to them. And there is yet another thing
worse than all this; namely, whereas the Ta-
vern-Drunkard sleeps and evaporates his Wine,
and comes to himself again, the Coffee-house-
Drunkard scarcely ever clearly dispels those
Vapours of News that have filled his Crown.

Bioph. That is smartly spoken: But however,
a Man shall look like a Male-content with
the

the Times, or, at least, will seem to be unconcerned for his Country, that wholly dis-regards News.

Sebast. With Reverence to publick Opinion, I should think the quite contrary in both Particulars. For in the first place, it is notorious that the Male-content is always listening after Novelty; and I cannot tell whether his Head be fuller of little Stories, or of Maggots; whereas the Man in good Humour, and contented, minds only his own Business, and lets it alone to God and the Kind to govern the World.

And then for the other Particular, it is the easiest thing in the World to observe, that your right News-monger cares not a rush which End goes forward, or whether the State of Things be good or bad for his Country, so there be News for his own Entertainment.

But after all, now I think better of it, I have a very remarkable Story to tell you: But you are so great a Critick you will believe nothing, and therefore I had as good hold my peace.

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebastian*, let us have it: You are a Person of good Intelligence, if you will please to communicate.

Sebast. It is so very strange and wonderful News, that I suspect your Faith; but yet it is such as puts me almost into an Ecstasy every time I think upon it.

Sebastian's strange News of a New-found-Land.

Bioph. Do not tantalize us with Expectation, whilst you raise the Value of your Story, nor tempt our Fancies to anticipate and de-flower it.

Sebast. Why then it is the Discovery and Description of a certain Country, which is (by relation)

lation) the very Garden and Paradise of the whole World; so transcendently admirable, that *Italy*, *Thessaly*, or whatsoever you have seen or heard of in all your Life, is nothing to it.

Bioph. Puh! Who would have expected Foreign News after such a Preface? And all but some *Island of Pines*, I warrant you! Or suppose it should be true, what can it be to us? However, go on *Sebastian*; perhaps it may afford us some Diversion.

Sebast. I persaged what Entertainment my News would have with you. What can it be to us, say you? Why, when you understand all, you will bless your self that there is such a place in the World, which you may go to if you please, where you may find Retreat from all Troubles at home, and be happy beyond Imagination: Nay, let me tell you, you must, you will go to it if you love your self.

Bioph. You speak at a strange rate, *Sebastian*; a Man would think you were either strangely imposed upon your self, or else that you had very mean Apprehensions of our Discretion. But let it suffice to say, That, soberly speaking, there is no Country upon the Face of the Earth can deserve this *Encomium*. Besides, when all is said that can be said, every Man's own Home is his best Country.

Sebast. Why, Do you not understand me? This which I am speaking of, is, or will be your Home too, at least if you will but take the pains to travel thither.

Bioph. I marry, thank you for that: But I wist it is better to believe, than to go look, in this Case. What! Change my Native Country, transplant my self at these Years! No, I am too old.

old, and have taken too deep Root where I am for that.

Phil. Assure your self, *Biophilus*, there is something extraordinary that *Sebastian* expresses himself thus: He is no Hypochondriack, nor whimsical Enthusiast; but a Man of the driest and best tempered Understanding.

Bioph. I have always thought no less, which raises my Wonder now. Come, pray you, *Sebastian*, tell us plainly what you have to say upon good Grounds, concerning this Place which you are in such a Rapture about.

Sebast. In earnest, Sir, I have to say all that is possible to be said, and much more than I can express.

Bioph. So it seems; for I perceive you are so full of it, you cannot vent your self; we must therefore broach you by degrees. In the first place, let me ask you, what is the Name of this strange Country?

Sebast. It is called *Urania*.

Bioph. A Romantick Name! But, I pray you, in what Longitude and Latitude is it situate, that a Man may know where to find it, if he should have a Mind to go thither?

Sebast. I am not skilful in that kind of Learning, neither do I remember that it was told me, in those Terms, how the Country lies; but perhaps this may tend to your Satisfaction: I am assured that they have no Night or Darkness there, for the Sun never goes off their Horizon; nor are there any long Evenings, and tedious Nights, which we complain of in *England*. By this Character, I suppose you may guess at the Latitude of the Place.

*An Alegorical
Description of the
New Country.*

Bioph.

Bioph. Well, I will consider of that at leisure: in the mean time, tell us what is said to be the Temper of the Air.

Sebast. O Sir, the Air is sweet and temperate beyond Compare; it is *Aether*, rather than Air; there is neither violent Heat nor Cold, no distinction of Summer and Winter; and indeed, no such thing, but a perpetual Spring; so that Flowers blossom, and Fruit ripen all the Year long: And by reason of this Serenity and Constancy of the Air, the Country is so healthfull, that there is never any Epidemical or Reigning Disease, on Man feeble and languishing; nay, not so much as Wrinkles or gray Hairs upon any Man's Head or Face, insomuch that you would think the Inhabitants were all absolutely immortal.

Bioph. If that one thing alone be true, I warrant you the Country wants no People.

Sebast. O very populous; yet, by reason of its prodigious Fruitfulness, it can never be overstocked; for, they say, it yields a fresh Harvest of all kind of Fruits every Month, and that a most abundant one; forasmuch as no Weeds, nor Thorns and Briars grow there, but only that which is good for the Use of Man; and, which is most of all wonderful, all this is brought forth spontaneously, without the Toil and Labour of Man.

They say also there are no kind of *Wild Beasts* there, either to affright and annoy the People, or to devour the Fruits of the Land; nay, not so much as any Serpents, or other venomous Creatures, or troublesome Insects: And all this is owing to the Clemency of the Air, the peculiar Nature of the Soil, together with God's Blessing upon both.

Bioph.

Bioph. I perceive a Man may eat well; and when he hath so done, may sleep in a whole Skin there; that I like, and I would to God it were not a Romance which you give us. But go on, *Sebastian*: What is the Polity and Government of the Country?

Sebast. The Government is perfectly Monarchical, and the Prince is Absolute; yet I do not hear that any of his Subjects wear *Wooden Shoes*, or feed upon *Cabbage*; but all of them enjoy their Liberty and Property as securely and fully as in any Commonwealth in the World.

There is no squabbling about Privileges, no interfering between Prerogative and Immunities, Dominion and common Right: The King commands what he will, and the People willingly obey him; for his Wisdom and Goodness moderate his Will and Power, better than all the Boundaries of written Laws.

And this I am informed of too, That tho' there be several Degrees of Subjects, as there are amongst us, because otherwise there could be no sufficient Encouragement to Industry, nor no Capacity in the Prince to set Marks of Favour upon those that deserve extraordinarily of him: yet from hence arise no Emulations amongst the Nobility, nor any Oppression of the Commons: The People do not envy and murmur against the Great Ones; nor, on the other side, do they, as greater Fish, devour the lesser.

Bioph. A rare Temper of Government this! and not less admirable than that of the Air you speak of before: You amaze me strangely. But what are the Staple Commodities of the Country?

Sebast.

Sebast. As for that, you must know, it is not with *Urania*, as with most other Countries; where usually one Province abounds with what another wants, and the other needs what that can spare; and so there is a Necessity of Reciprocal Intercourse between them, both to relieve their Necessities mutually, and to discharge their Superfluities: And herein, you know, lies both the Reason of Trade, and the Security of Alliances between several Countries in our Parts of the World. But not *Urania* being (as was wont to be said of *Egypt*) a Country self-sufficient, depends not at all upon Foreign Commerce; and therefore, as it needs nothing from abroad, so consequently it sends out few or none of those Commodities it abounds with; but rather (as I shall tell you by and by) invites Foreigners to come over to them, and reside amongst them, and so to partake freely of the Advantages of that happy Land.

Yet I must tell you, they have very great Rarities in those Parts, and such as are exceedingly desired by all other People that understand the worth of them: As, in particular, to specify some few, which are not at all to be found any where else.

In the first place, They have the true *Elixir Vitæ*, a very precious Balm, far beyond that of *Gilead*, that perfectly cures all Diseases, both inward and outward, I had almost said of Body and Mind. This operates without any Pain to the Patient; and in outward Applications, heals all kind of Wounds, and leaves no Scar or Mark behind it.

They have also an admirable Water, which so quickens all the Senses, and peculiarly the Sight,

Sight, that a Man by the help of it shall see further than by a Telescope, and pierce into the very Secrets of Nature.

The common Food of the Country is somewhat answerable to the Description of *Manna*; and hath that peculiar Taste which every Man affects, and satisfies all the Powers of Nature. They have also a delicious Wine, called *Lachryma Christi*, which amongst other Vertues, makes Men forget all Sorrows whatsoever: And this they usually drink in an Amethyst Cup, which preserves them from surfeits or Intemperance, what proportion soever they drink.

Amongst the rest, they have a sort of *Nitre*, so very powerful and abstersive, that it takes away all Spots, Blemishes and Aspersions, and makes those that use it so very Beautiful, that they ravish the Eyes of Beholders.

It were endless to go about to enumerate the Commodities of this Country, which clearly out-goes the *Holy-Land*, tho it was said that in *Solomon's* Days Gold and Silver were there as common as the Stones of the Street. And for proof of it, the Inhabitants are generally so rich and prosperous, that there is not one poor Man in the whole Land; not one to be found that doth need, or will ask an Alms. The Hungry and Naked, those grievous Spectacles, (too sadly common in most other Places) are not to be seen there; of which amongst other Causes, these are assigned, *viz.* There is no sordid and cruel *Miser* there, who hoards up what others should live upon; nor is there any wasteful Glutton or Epicure, who devours his own and other Folks Portion too. In short, they say, all desirable things are there in such abundance,

that every Man is as rich, as full, and as happy as he pleases.

Bioph. If all this was possible to be true, which I must beg your Pardon to declare I have not Faith enough to believe, yet the Felicity of this Country could not be long liv'd; for it will certainly derive upon it self the Envy of all its Neighbours; and the Effect of that will be, that those who have the best Iron will quickly become Masters of this Wealth.

Sebast. Nay, *Biophilus*, as for that there is no Danger, for the Country is altogether inaccessible, save only by one narrow Way; and that is so well guarded and defended, that to this Day no Enemy hath ever had the Confidence to assail it. And besides, all the Inhabitants are in such perfect Peace and Amity one with another, and maintain so inviolably their Allegiance towards their Sovereign, that as no Foreigner hath any Encouragement to Enterprize upon them by Treachery, so neither can he, without mighty Folly, think himself considerable enough to prevail by Force against such an united Strength.

Bioph. Now you speak of that, I pray give me leave to ask you one Question more: What is the Humour of the People; both amongst themselves, and towards Strangers?

Sebast. This is as admirable in its kind, as any thing I have told you yet. The Complexion of the People is said to be universally Sanguine; and consequently, they are sprightly and cheerful, ingenious and complaisant, open-hearted, and yet grave; without Fraud, and without Jealousie; they neither Intend any Hurt, nor do they suspect any. Amongst other Instances

stances of their sedate Cheerfulness, they are exceedingly addicted to Musick; and their Songs are observed to be composed, for the most part, in praise of their Prince, the Splendour of his Court, the Glory of his Atchievements, and the Felicity of his Reign.

So far are they from Wrath and Choler, that in the Memory of Man there hath not been one Law-Suit commenced amongst them; and, which is more, not one Theological Disputation, which usually are attended with so much Heat and Animosity in these Parts of the World. But as for Tale-bearers, Whisperers, Back-biters, and all that melancholy and envious *Brood*, there is not one of them to be found in all the Country; every Man there loves his Neighbour as himself, and is as tender of his Interest and Reputation as of his own.

And then, for their Temper and Carriage towards Strangers, they are infinitely civil and obliging: They deride not other Men's Habit, or Mein, or Language, or Customs, or Complexions; but contrariwise, whensoever any such come amongst them, they welcome them heartily, treat them with all Instances of Hospitality, and by all possible Obligations and Indearments, invite them to become one People with themselves, and, as much as in them lies, are ready to contribute their Assistance towards their Voyage.

Bioph. This is a very strange Relation as ever I heard in my Life. But, in plain English, it is too good to be true. All this can amount to no more than to some *Utopia*, or new *Atlantis*. Pardon my Freedom, good *Sebastian*: I acknowledge you a wise and a Learned Gentle-

man; that Character all the World allows you: But in this particular Story, some body hath unworthily abused your good Nature; for it can be no better than a Fiction, a Legend, a mere Flam.

Sebast. You do not ordinarily think a Man bound to warrant the News he tells you, but you used to be contented to take it as he hath it; and I am sure you will not allow me to prescribe to you what you shall believe. However, I assure you, upon the Word of a Gentleman, and a Christian, I have not devised it of my own Head, but am as well satisfied of the Truth and Reality of the Relation I have made to you, as it is possible for me to be of any thing which I have not seen with my Eyes; and I am very confident I have as good Grounds for my Persuasion, as it is fit for a discreet Man to require in such a Case.

Bioph. I wish you could satisfy me as well: I pray therefore do us the favour to let us know what Probabilities you go upon in this Matter.

Sebast. They say, we English Men (above all People) love to be cheated, and encourage Impostors by our Credulity. But if that be the Humour of our Country-Men, I must beg their Pardon if I a little vary from them in that Particular. I confess I am not so ill natured, as to suspect that every body I converse with, hath Designs upon me; nor yet am I so supinely soft and credulous, as to be at every body's Mercy; or so greedy of News, as to swallow all that comes, without chewing. And, as to the Business before us, I positively affirm to you, I had
this

this strange Relation (as you esteem it) from one that came from the Place, and was an Eye-witness of what he reported, and therefore could not be deceived himself in what he related. And then, his Quality was such, as that he could have no Interest to impose upon me therein ; for he was no less a Man than the only Son of the great Monarch of the Country ; and he came as Ambassador-Extraordinary from the King, his Father, on purpose to invite and Incline our People to participate of that happy Region, and of all the admirable Advantages aforesaid ; and assured us, That all which came should be free Denizons of *Urania*.

Bioph. Ay, good *Sebastian*, he told you so : But how are you sure he was not an Impostor, and designed to put Tricks upon you, and our good natured Country-men ?

Sebast. As for that, his very Person and Mien spake for him ; both which were so August and Grand, as that no mean Man could bear out the Port he used. Besides this, he came not in a Clancular Way, but made his Publick Entry ; and his Train and Equipage was Grave and Majestick, like himself, far beyond the empty Pomp and Pageantry of a Counterfeit. His Commission and Letters Credential also were publickly seen, read, and allowed ; and they were sealed with such a Seal, as no Wit of Man could imitate, or Counterfeit.

Add unto all this, I have seen the Map or Chart of the Country, I have perused the Digest of the Laws of the Kingdom, these Eyes have read the Records of their History, and with this Mouth I have tasted the delicious Fruits

of the Land. What would you have more to justify the Matter of Fact?

Bioph. What would I have more? why, I think you venture too great a Stock in one Bottom: I would not trust to any one Man, whatsoever he were, in a Relation of this nature; I should require to see and speak with many about it, before I would believe it.

Sebast. You say well. But can you think it reasonable to require, that so great a Prince should send many Ambassadors on such an Errand, when he aims not at his own Greatness, or the Accommodating of his own Affairs, nor hath any need of our Alliance or Assistance; but merely designs our Benefit? Or can you expect that he should send every day fresh Envoys; and that not only to whole Countries, but to every individual Person too? And if you could imagine such a Prince should condescend to this also, can you think it would be easie to find many fit Persons for such a purpose, who would be willing to forsake the Glories of such a Court, or the Contentments of Home in such a Region; and to expose themselves to the Difficulties and Hazards of Travel, as well as to the Change of Air and Diet, and a Thousand other Inconveniences attendant upon such an Expedition? No, *Biophilus*, it was an Instance of wonderful Goodness, that such a Prince should send one Ambassador on such an Errand; and admirable Charity and Self-denial in him that undertook and performed it.

Bioph. You speak reason, I must acknowledge, in that Particular. But yet I can never believe, that if there were any such Country as your Intelligence amounts to, it should lie undiscovered

to these parts of the World until now. What ! *Drake, Cavendish, Columbus, Davis*, — none of them, in all their Travels, take notice of such a Place ; nor give the least Intimation of it, until now.

Sebast. That is no such strange thing as you make it ; if you call to mind how long a time it was before the World would believe there were *Antipodes*, and yet it is plain that so long one full half of the World was unknown to the other. Or, if you remember, that Time was, (and that not an ignorant Age neither) when the *Roman* Empire was thought to embrace the whole Earth, which as now we are certain took not in one Fifth (perhaps not one Tenth) of it. Do you not know that *Hercules's* Pillars were accounted the boundaries of *Humane Travels* ; and that, for a great many Ages, both the Torrid and the Frigid Zones (as they are called) were esteemed uninhabitable ; and all that time the World was ignorant of it self ? Besides, you know it is not very long since those vast Tracts of Land, the *West-Indies*, were first discovered by some of the Persons you have named. And, to say no more, I pray, how many Ages passed over the Heads of Mankind, before this our Native Country of *Britain* (as considerable as it is, and we justly esteem it) came into any Knowledge or Consideration with the rest of the World ; Think it not strange therefore if *Urania* was so lately discovered.

Bioph. But that which I principally intended to say, was this : You afford me matter of great Wonder, that you should be so much concerned for a Place very newly discovered (if it be discovered ;) but especially, that you should be-

lieve so many strange things of it, before any one Person hath gone from hence, and returned hither again, to confirm those Reports of it.

Sebast. Ifs and Exceptions are endless ; and I know no Way to make a Man believe, that hath no Mind to it ; Yet I will give you all the Satisfaction I am able, and that which I think is sufficient in such a Case. You must know therefore that this Country hath not been wholly undiscovered until now, as you suppose; for I my self have seen a Book of great Authority and Antiquity, which, tho somewhat obscurely and figuratively written, yet certainly pointed at such a Place, and in some measure described it too, to him that attentively read and considered it. And besides, there are some very credible Relations concerning some certain Persons, that have hitherto made very fortunate Voyages thither.

But as to that you object, That no Man hath gone from hence thither, and returned again to us, to bring us the Tidings ; you will easily satisfy your self therein, if you consider what I intimated before, *viz.* That those who once get thither, can have no Inclinations to make a Change so much to their disadvantage, as it must needs be for them to return hither again. Besides, Tho they say the Passage is not very long thither, yet it is no common Road ; and therefore very few will (at least unnecessarily) undertake it.

*Preparations for
the Journey to Ura-
nia.*

Phil. But if it be an untraced Path, how shall a Man find the Way thither, if he have a mind to go ?

Sebast.

Sebast. O *Philander* ! There is no great difficulty in that, if a Man be well resolved on the Business ; for besides a Chart, and very punctual Instructions which the Ambassador left behind him for that purpose when he was amongst us, there are great store of very skillful and faithful Guides and Pilots, who freely offer their Service, and will not fail, with God's Blessing, to land us safe there.

Phil. I cannot tell what *Biophilus* thinks of this Business ; But for my part, *Sebastian* ? I am so ravished with your Relation, that if there be such a Place in the World, I will find it out, by God's Help. I thank God I am no Male-content, either with my Native Country, or my private Fortunes ; yet I see no Reason we should, like Mushrooms, live and die upon the same Spot, and be a mere *Accessio Soli*, or Heir-loines to the place where they happen to be born ; especially if we may thus much mend our selves by the Change. I am a Citizen of the World ; and that shall be my Country where I can fare best.

But will you go with me, *Sebastian* ? Then I shall not be only out of all Doubt of the Truth of your Narrative, when I see you so far believe it your self, as to adventure all upon it ; but I shall with much more Cheerfulness change my Country, when I do not change my Friend, nor fore-go your Company.

Sebast. Obligingly spoken, and bravely resolved, *Philander* : By God's Grace, I will go with you ; and to assure you of my Intentions, I will now acquaint you that I have been this good while in setting Things in order, and in making Preparations for the Voyage.

Phil.

Phil. But how shall we dispose of our Estates here? And what Commodities had we best to furnish our selves with, to carry over with us?

Sebast. As for the Disposal of our present Fortunes I can tell you, there are very sure Returns betwixt this Country and that; for the Prince himself will be your Security, if you put your Effects into such Hands as he hath appointed. But as for Merchandise to carry with us, there will be no need of that; for the Country which we have in our Eye is so gloriously rich and plentiful, the Prince is so noble and benign, and all the Inhabitants so kind and charitable, that we shall be sure, as soon as ever we come there, to be furnished *gratis* with all that our Hearts can wish. And, moreover, if we should put our selves to the trouble of transporting our *Baggage* with us, it would not only incumber us in our Journey, but would also seem to be such mere Trash and Lumber when you come there, that we should be ashamed of it, and of our selves too, for setting such a Value upon it.

But there is another thing, and much more material, which I must needs tell you of, in order to our more favourable Reception when we come there; that is, we must before-hand quite alter our Habit and Garb, and not so much as smell of the Earth we came from. Amongst other things, we must dis-use our selves from Onions and Garlick, and from Flesh too, that we may the easier accord with the Diet of the Country: And we must refine our Spirits, that we may be fit to breath in that pure Air: And having so done, there needs no more but to carry with us great Minds, and large Souls, to qualifie us, both for the Society and Enjoyments there.

Phil. Thank you, dear Friend, and Fellow-Traveller, (for so I will henceforward stile you) for these Instructions: I will use the best of my Endeavours to be fitted accordingly. But is there any thing else that I need to be advised in?

Sebast. O, Yes; there is one thing more which I doubt you do not think of; and I am somewhat afraid lest the Mention of it should discourage you; but it must be, and there is no avoiding it.

Phil. In the Name of God, what is it? Mistrust not my Courage or Constancy: I'll stick at nothing that crosses my way to *Urania*.

Sebast. You remember I have intimated to you already, that when we come at the Country we design, we shall be immortal, we can never die afterwards; but we must die beforehand, or we shall never come thither. This is the Pinch of the Business: What think you of it now, *Philander*?

Phil. Never the worse for that, Fellow-Traveller. But, Good Lord! What a Dream have I been in all this while? I thought verily you had spoken *Historical Truth* of some rare Earthly Country: But now my Eyes are open, and I perceive you mean Heaven; that's the *Urania* you have all this while amuzed us with. Now I can unriddle the whole Business: I have now a Clue to guide me through the Maze of your Discourse, and can decypher all the Figures you have used. I am sure 'tis Heaven only can answer the Character you have given: That is the Place where there is no pain, Sicknefs, nor Death; there is no Night nor Darknefs, but a perpetual Day; there is to be found the true Balsam that cures all the Distempers and Wounds

Wounds, both of Body and Mind; there are to be had all the other Rarities which you have mentioned; *Jesus Christ* is the Ambassador from God Almighty, that invites us thither? All is plain and easie now. How dull was I, that I could not understand you sooner!

Bioph. And have you drolled with us all this while, *Sebastian*? Have you wheedled me back again into the Subject I declined? Is your famous *Urania* in another World? I thought your News was impossible to be true, and now you as good as confess it.

Sebast. By your pardon, *Biophilus*, have I done you any Wrong? You asked for News, and I have told you good and true News; News of more Importance, and more comfortable, than any the Coffee-house affords; not ill-natured Stories of *Whig* and *Tory*, nor Surmizes about *France* and *Italy*, *Turk* and *Count Teckelej*; but a great Truth of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, a Kingdom wherein there is Righteousness and Justice, Unity and Joy, Love and Good Will, Everlasting Peace, and Everlasting Life; a State of that Felicity, that it is able to make us weary of this World, and to render the Time of our Life tedious to us, till we come to the Enjoyment of it; in a Word, that is sufficient to make all the Ways of Vertue seem easie and delectable, and even Death it self desirable in the Way thither.

What think you of it, *Philander*, now you understand what Country it is I persuaded you to? Doth your Mind hold for the Voyage? Will you go on with your Preparations for it, as we were discoursing before? Will you venture to shoot the Gulph, that you may arrive at it?

Phil.

Phil. Yes, Fellow-Traveller, I hold my Resolution. For, tho I find I was mistaken in the Particular, yet not in the general; it was an Earthly Paradise that I had in my Thoughts all the while you were discoursing figuratively to us, and I had no other Apprehensions of your Design; and there- in *Biophilus* was more in the right than I, who was confident there could be no such Country in this World as you described: but I heartily thank you for the Deception; you have cheated us into our own Advantage. And now that I understand you, I do not change my course, tho I change my Port; I hope I shall not be so absurd, as to be more in earnest for an Earthly Country, than for an Heavenly.

Philander transported with the Contemplation of Heaven.

Who would not gladly be at Everlasting Rest, and in an unchangeable Condition? We are *but Pilgrims and Strangers in this World*; but there we shall be at home, and in our Father's House: Here we are continually tossed with Winds and Seas, tormented betwixt Hopes and Fears; there we come into Harbour, and shall be safe as upon a Rock, stable and settled as the Mountains.

Who can chuse but wish to live for ever, and would not be contented to die once, that he might be out of the reach of Chance or Danger for ever after? Everlasting Life! What an Ocean of Joy and Felicity is contained in it! It puts me into an Ecstasy to think of it? Surely he doth not love himself, or doth not understand himself, who would not gladly leave an uncertain, troublesome, quarrellsome, foolish disputing, suspicious, envious World, upon
far

far easier Terms than the Attainment of it. But to live with the Ever-blessed Jesus, to spend Eternity in the Society of good and wise, kind and peaceable Men, to enter into everlasting Friendships, inviolable Peace, unchangeable Felicity; I am ravished and transported with the *Thoughts* of it.

When once I had the happiness to take notice of a poor Man, blind from his Mother's Womb, who never had seen the Sun, nor could have any Notion of Beauty or Colours, nor of any of that Variety of delightful Objects which the Eye and Light present to us, and entertain us with; when afterwards, (I say) by a strange Cure, this poor Man had his Eyes opened, and found a Croud of New delights press in upon him, he thought himself surrounded with Miracles, and was almost distracted with Wonder. And certainly, no less, but a great deal more, will our Surprise be when we come to Heaven; where, probably, we shall have new Powers opened, which shall discover such Glories to us as we were not capable of perceiving before, if they had been presented to us: But most certainly she shall then have new Objects of Delight to entertain those Powers we have, and those transcendent to all we ever had Experience of before.

Or when I think of the Children of *Israel's* first Coming out of *Egypt*, where they had lived for some Hundred of Years in the Condition of Slaves, under the jealous Eye of a barbarous Prince, treated with Hardship and Severity, and exposed to all the Indignities, Insolences and Cruelty of a faithless and ingrateful People; and then, after this, (leaping, as we say, out

of the Frying-Pan, into the Fire) were carried into a vast and howling Wilderness ; and there spending Forty Years more amidst Seas and Mountains ; in danger of Wild Beasts, and beset with Enemies ; having no City of Refuge, no Strong-Holds, no Friends, no Allies, no Comfort or Supplies, but from Hand to Mouth : When (I say) these poor People arrived at last at the Promised Land, the Land of *Canaan*, a Land of Olive-Yards and Vine-Yards, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and the Glory of all Lands, and found themselves peaceably possessed of it, under their own God, their own Prince, and their own Laws ; and flowing in such Plenty of all good Things, that they now became the admiration and Envy of all their Neighbours, who had been the subject of their Contempt and Scorn before ; I can but fanſie how they were astonished at the Change, what a Wonder they were to themselves : And I am apt to believe, that for some time after they could not but suspect they were under a pleasant Illusion of Fancy, and that all their Felicity was no better than a Dream.

So, assuredly, when we shall first come to *Heaven*, our spiritual *Canaan*, to the Enjoyment of an happiness of God's preparing, who hath all the Ingredients of Felicity in his power, and infinite Wisdom to contrive and compound them, and unspeakable Goodness to bestow them ; and who, as the Scripture expresses it, hath, from the Beginning of the World, been designing and preparing such a System of Joy and Felicity, as may at once both most delight his Creatures, and display all his aforesaid Attributes : When (I say) we shall first observe the strange Change
between

between a narrow, stingy, necessitous, unquiet, sickly, peevish, and contentious World, which we have left behind us and the Settlement and Peace, Plenty and Glory of that we enter upon; it will not be easie for us (without Larger Minds than we have now) to know how to behave our selves; we shall be apt to be oppressed with Wonder, and, if it were possible, to die with Excess of Joy.

Sebast. You speak, bravely, and sensibly, dear *Phil.* You seem to have gone up to Mount *Nebo*, and to have fed your Eyes with the Prospect of the *Holy Land*: But have you considered the Difficulties of the Way, as well as the Happiness of the Journey's End? will you not, like the *Israelites*, (you spake of even now) repent, and bethink your self of turning back when you encounter Difficulty or Danger? Will not Death affright you when it appears in all its dismal Pomp? Will you not shrink when you shall come to be stripped naked of all your Worldly Habiliments? Will you not have a Lingring after your old Accommodations, your fine House, rich Furnitures, pleasant Gardens, sprightly Wines, or any other Pleasures and Entertainments of the body?

Phil. No, no, *Sebastian*, I will go to Heaven, whatever come of it. What can discourage a Man when Heaven is at Stake? If the Journey put me to a little trouble, There is Rest at the end of it. What it is to exercise a little Patience, when a Man shall be crowned at last? Who would not run, strive, do, or suffer any thing, and venture all, upon such a Wager?

Shall

Shall I be frighted with Death? That will come however; and I am sure the neglecting Eternal Life is not the Way to escape it.

Christian Resolution.

Shall I be solicitous for my *Estate* and *Worldly Accommodations*, when I know, whether I go to Heaven or no, I must shortly leave them all behind me? And surely, if they cannot save me from Death, they ought not to hinder me of Eternal Life.

Or shall I hanker after Onions and Garlick, and the Flesh-pots of *Egypt*, as you called the Pleasures of the *Body*, which will certainly forsake me, if I do not forsake them first? No, I have counted the Cost, there is nothing shall discourage me *by the Grace of God*; I will go to Heaven. But, I pray, let us not part *Company*; let us go to Heaven together.

Sebast. With all my Heart, dear Friend; for, tho' I doubt we must not expect much *Company* with us, yet perfect Solitude is somewhat uncomfortable; and there are

The Advantages of good Company in the way to Heaven.

great Advantages of *Society*. For, if any Body should be so absurd as to laugh at us *on our Journey*, we can the better despise them. If either of us should happen to be heavy and weary in our *Way*, we may animate and quicken one another. If any Difficulty befall, that may be too hard for any one of us, by our united Strength we may be able to encounter and remove it. If either of us should swerve a little out of the Narrow Way, towards the Right Hand, or towards the Left, the other may re-call and rectify him. Besides, the great additional *Comfort* it will be when we come at our *Journeys End*,

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not only that we see one another happy, and enjoy one anothers Society; but especially when we reflect upon the good Service we have done to one another in bringing each other thither, we shall have our Joys re-doubled by the Reflection, and feel not only our own individual Shares, but that also of each other.

Phil. Happily thought of, Fellow-Traveller. But will not *Biophilus* go with us too? What say you, Sir?

Bioph. You are honest Gentlemen, and my good Friends: But, *Lord*, What Romances do you make! What Castles do you build in the Air! And what Shadows do you feed your selves withal! You talk of

Heaven as confidently as if you had travelled an Hundred Times through all the Regions of it; or rather, indeed, as if you had visited the World in the Moon. But when all is done, did ever you, or any Body else, see such a Place as Heaven? For God's sake, therefore, leave these Enthusiastical Whimsies, and talk like Men: Speak of something that is certain and visible, or probable at least; and do not forego Substance for Shadows, Certainties for Uncertainties.

Phil. God help you, good Neighbour, in requital of the Caution you give us. Assure yourself, we have the same Senies, and the same Self-love that you have; and only wish you had the same Faith that we have. We are not willing to part with Certainties for Uncertainties; for if Heaven be not certain, we are sure nothing else is. And as for the Things of this World, they are so far from it, that nothing is more certain, than that we must part with them shortly, whether

Scepticism displaying its Humour, and checked by sober Reason.

ther we will or no. But as for the other World, we know whom we have believed.

Bioph. I tell you, all is but Dream and Fancy; there is no Proof in the World for it. All you have to say is, that Men must believe: As if you should say, Shut your Eyes, and see; you persuade a Man to find the Way to Heaven blindfold. No; give me good Proof, or I'll not stir a Foot: With me Seeing is Believing.

Phil. Remember your self, good Neighbour: Are not you a Christian? Do not you believe that Jesus Christ came from Heaven on purpose to make Discovery to us of those Celestial Regions, and to shew us the Way thither? And did not he confirm his Report to us by undeniable Miracles? Did he not come into the World miraculously, and return thither again visibly? Did he not from thence send down admirable Tokens of his Presence and Authority there, especially on the famous Day of *Pentecost*? Besides, Do you not see all wise Men provide for another World; and that generally good and vertuous Men, when they come to die, are ravished with Joy in Contemplation of it, as if they really saw Heaven open to receive them?

Bioph. Whether or no I believe as much as you do, yet I believe this one thing instead of all the rest, that we are born to be cheated. For, what with the Illusions of our own melancholy Fancies, what by the Prejudices of our Education, and the imperious Dictates of others; what by the Authority of unaccountable Tradition, and publick Fame; and what by the Designs of Politicians, it is an hard Matter to know what else to believe.

Phil. Indeed, *Biophilus*, I am both sorry and ashamed to hear you talk at this rate. And I

do not wonder now, that you were so desirous to decline this sort of Discourse when we fell upon it. I hope you take me for your Friend; as well as your Neighbour; and *Sebastian* here for a discreet and worthy Gentleman: Suffer your self to be persuaded by us to think and speak more soberly, and becoming your self in these great Matters; or if you will not think like a Christian, yet talk like a Man; for, let me tell you, you seem not only to reject Christianity, but all Religion in general; and upon those Terms you will be as little fit for this *World*, as for that which is to come.

For, What a sad Creature is a Man of no Religion at all? What State or Civil Government will be able to endure him, whom no Oaths can oblige, or fasten upon? How can there be any *Civil Society* with him that hath no Faith, that can neither trust, nor be trusted? What Security can such a Man give, that he shall not disturb the State, violate the Person of his Prince, falsifie his Trust, betray his Friend, cut his Neighbour's Throat, if he be under the Awe of no God, the Expectation of no Rewards nor Punishments in another *World*? What Security can there be, I say, in dealing with such a Man, what Sincerity in his Friendship, what Safety in his Neighbourhood? For all these depend upon the Reverence of *Religion*, which he that is wholly destitute of, must needs become *devotum caput*: a Wolf's Head, the Pest and Vermin of *Humane Society*.

Do not therefore, dear *Biophilus*, at once both stifflie your own Conscience, and affront the common Sense and Reason of Mankind. Do not, under the pretence of being more witty and sagacious

cious than other Men, reason your self into Brutality; and whilst you grow over-wise in your own Eyes, be the most fatally mistaken, and lost for ever.

Why should you abandon your self to *Desperation*, and leave your self without any Refuge in *Adversity*? We are well and cheerful here at present, God be thanked; but the Time will come when God will stand us in stead, when we shall have need of the *Retreats* and *Comforts of Religion*. Above all things in the *World*, leave not your self without *Hope* in your Latter End; do as becometh a Man of your Parts and Discretion, suspect *your own Suspicions*, and let not the Opinion you have, that other Men are under Prejudices, prejudice you against the Arguments for Believing. Come, deal ingenuously, and open your Breast; propound the *Grounds of your Suspicions*, the *Objections* you have against *Religion*; and tho' I cannot promise you that I will answer them all to your Satisfaction, yet I doubt not but there is one that will.

Bioph. Look you, Gentlemen, you put me into a great Strait; for if, upon this Invitation of yours, I do not disclose my Mind to you, I shall seem dis-ingenuous, and you will think worse of me than perhaps I deserve; and, on the other side, if I do discover my Sentiments, it is probable that my Creed will fall so many Articles short of yours, that we shall break our into some Heats, and endanger the Continuance of our Neighbourly Conversation. However, since it seems to be your Desire, I will be plain with you, in Confidence that, as you are Gentlemen, you will deal ingenuously with me; and if you can do me no good, you will do me

no hurt. My meaning is, That if it should happen you do not convince my Reason, I hope you will not defame my Person, nor expose me to the Insolencies of the Rabble, who believe in gross, and by whole sale, and throw Dirt upon all that chew what they swallow.

The Epicurean Creed.

Now, in the first place, that you may not think me a perfect Sceptick, I declare to you, that I acknowledge the Being of a God; and that not only because the Generality of Mankind, and even *Epicurus* himself owned so much, but because it is not conceivable how the *World* should be, without one; for no *Wit* or *Reason* of Man can evince to me, how any thing should begin to be, without some necessary and Eternal Existent, to begin the Motion, and to bring it into Being; or, which is the same thing in effect, there can be no Second Cause, if there be no First.

But then, beyond this, you must pardon me; for, to deal sincerely with you, I do not think that this God minds or troubles himself about the *World*, after he hath made it: Much less do I see any sufficient Ground for that which *Philander* hath been talking so warmly about; namely, a *World* to come. And for Eternal Life, (which Men speak such great things of) I profess, I look upon it as a flat Impossibility; for as much as I see Men die, but see no Foundation for a Belief, that there is any Life or Existence out of a Body.

There are some other Points of Affinity with these that I with-hold my Assent from; But because you have challenged me to a *Rational Debate*, therefore, to give fair Play, and to put the

the Business between us to an Issue, I will insist but upon one Point, and that shall be the same which we fell into by chance at our first coming together; namely, Whether there be such a Thing as a publick Tribunal, or general Judgment, where Men's Actions shall be re-viewed and censured after this Life. Prove me but this one Point sufficiently and plainly, and I will grant you all the rest.

Sebast. Now you shew your self a Man, and a shrewd one too, tho not a Christian: For I must acknowledge that you have, with great Judgment, pitched upon the very Cardinal Point of Religion;

The great Consequence and general Influence of the Belief of a Judgment.

and which, if it be proved, (as I do not doubt but it shall be) will inferr all the rest; but if it miscarry, all falls with it. The Persuasion of a Judgment to come is the great Awe upon Men's Consciences, the principal Motive of Vertue and Piety, the Restraint and Check upon Vice and Wickedness; and, indeed, the Sinew of Civil Government, and Bond of Humane Society. This both supposes the Being of a God, (which you grant) and of a Providence also, (which you deny;) for if there were not a God, it is evident there could be no Providence in this World, nor Judgment in another: And this, if it be granted, or proved, necessarily draws after it Rewards and Punishments in the Life to come; for otherwise a Judgment would be but a Matter of Curiosity, and a Trouble to no purpose. You have therefore, in making Choice of this for the Critical or Decisive Point, given great Proof of your own Sagacity, and put the Matter upon a right Issue.

Bioph. Well, prove it then.

Sebast. What proof do you require of this? Why should not the *Testimony* of the *Holy Scripture* satisfy you? For, in the first place, if there be a God, (which you have acknowledg'd) you cannot but think it reasonable, that if he intends to judge the *World*, he should give some Intimation of it to the Sons of Men before-hand, since they must needs be so highly concerned in the Knowledge of it. And then, in the next place, the Scripture cannot be denied to be as express and full in this Particular, as it is possible for Words to make it. There God declares and confirms it innumerable times; and the more to awaken Men to the Consideration of it, and Preparation for it, he is said to have appointed a set Time for it, he hath foretold who shall be the Judge, with what Pomp and Retinue he shall come attended, what Measures he shall proceed by, and what shall be the Circumstances of that great Solemnity.

Bioph. Excuse me there, *Sebastian*; I am not to be born down by *Authority*, but convinced by *Reason*. If you will do any good upon me, you must deal with me as a Philosopher, not a bigotted Person.

Sebast. By your Favour, Sir, it is not to impose upon you, to give you *Divine Authority* for proof. If, indeed, I should urge you only with the Opinions of Men, you might complain I did you Wrong; for in such a Case, your Denial would have as much *Authority* as their Assertion: But I hope God may be believed upon his own Word, especially in a Business of this nature, which depends so much upon the Determination

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of his Will: For, who can tell God's Mind better than himself. *Who knows the Mind of Man, but the Spirit of a Man which is in him?* And who can pretend to declare what God will do, unless he be pleased to reveal his Intentions? But if he declare he will judge the World, we may be sure it shall be done.

Bioph. Ay, but that is the Question, *Sebastian.* How shall I be assured that God hath any such Intentions, or hath made any such Declaration?

Sebast. That which we call by the Name of *Holy Scripture*, is nothing else but a Collection of such Declarations of the Mind of the *Divine Majesty*, as he hath thought fit, from time to time, to make to the Sons of Men. And those Books which are so called, have been revered by wise Men in all Ages upon that Account, as such: All imaginable Care hath been taken to preserve them from Corruption or Depravation; and several of the best of Men have exposed their Lives, rather than consent to the Destruction of them. Now, why should you call in question the Authority of these Books, which you cannot do without impeaching the Wisdom of the most able, and the Sincerity of the most honest of Men; and upon the same Terms you derogate from the Faith of all Mankind, and must (if you will be impartial) abrogate the Credit of all the old Records in the World. For as much as (besides all other Considerations) these Sacred Records, I mean the Books of the *Old and New Testament*, do bear an irrefragable Testimony to each other; and, as a Pair of Indentures, justify one another. Which you will easily be convinced of, if you consider, that these two Vo-

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lumes were written in several very remote *Ages*, and consequently by Persons that could hold no Correspondence one with another; and were in the Custody of those that were of such contrary Interests and Opinions, that it was impossible they either would or could conspire together to put a Cheat upon the World in them. Now, if, notwithstanding, these two Books (in the Circumstances aforesaid) shall verifie one another, so as that whatsoever the *Old Testament* promises, the *New Testament* performs; what the one fore-told, the other represents the Accomplishment of; what Ground is, or can there be, to suspect the Truth of them? For, if several Witnesses, and those of several Countries, and of contrary Interests, such as never saw the Faces of one another before, and therefore neither would nor could combine together and contrive their Story, and especially being examined a-part too, shall notwithstanding jump in the same Matter of Fact, and Circumstances also, there is no Man so humourfome, and abounding in his own Sense, but will allow their Evidence to be good and substantial; then much more is there very good Ground to believe these Books, which have all these Advantages, and several other, which I will not insist upon.

Bioph. These are pretty things which you say; but this is not that kind of Proof I expected from you. If this be all the Satisfaction you can give me, I am where I was.

Sebast. No, *Biophilus*, this is not all I have to say; but I thought fit to remonstrate to you the Sufficiency of this kind of Proof in it self, which Men of your Way are apt to make so slight of; and thence to convince you, that those Men
that

that take up with this alone, are not such soft and credulous People, as you are wont to represent them.

But what if I had no other Proof but this, I do not find that you are able to reply any thing to it; it is an easier thing to hough at an Argument, than to answer it. Besides, If this Way of Probation were far less considerable than it is, yet you know that any Evidence will serve against none; and the meanest Arguments will carry a Cause, when there is nothing to be said on the other side. If you could but pretend to prove, on your part, that there were no such thing as a Judgment to come, you had then some Reason to be strict in your Demands of Proof from me, of what I assert: But in a true Balance, the least Grain or Moment in the World will cast the Scale, when there is nothing against it. Now, since you know well enough, you can offer no kind of Proof of an Assertion contrary to this we have before us, nothing in the Earth but over wise Doubts, grave Suspicious, and perhaps it may not be so; I appeal to your impartial Reason, whether it be not more fit to suspect (at least) that it is so where there is some Proof of it, than to suspect it is not so where no Argument is given for the Negative; nay, indeed, where none can be given.

It is just Prudence to prepare for a Day of Judgment, though the Evidence were less than it is.

Negatives, you know, are hard to prove in general; but especially in such a Case as this is: For he that undertakes to prove such a Negative, hath but one of these two Ways to do it, viz. Either he must affirm, that he hath surveyed the whole State of Nature, and seen all the Causes

Causes that are in working; and then must assert *de facto*, that there is no such thing upon the Loom as that he denies: And also that he perfectly understands the whole Mind and Will of God, and that he intends no such thing; or else he must demonstrate by Reason, that it is plainly impossible, and a flat Contradiction, that any such thing should be. Either of which you cannot, without intolerable Absurdity, affirm in the present Case.

So that, as I said, you have nothing but bare Suspicions on your side, (whatever Arguments I have on mine.) Now, besides the unequal Balance of *Nothing* against *Something*, be it never so small, do but consider what strange Imprudence it is to Adventure so great a Stake, as all your Interest in another World amounts to, upon a mere *Non putâram*. For, what if such a thing should happen to prove true at last, what will become of you then, what a sad Condition are you cast into!

Wise Men are wont to value, not only Certainties, but also Probabilities, and even Contingencies also. Now, seeing it is not impossible but such a thing may be, and it is of infinite Consequence if it should be, there is all the Wisdom in the *World* to be provided for it. You will say, It may not be: But that is all that *Infidelity* it self can enable you to say: And then sure it is far safer to suppose that it may be, for no Hurt can come of that; but the Danger is unspeakable on the other side, if it should prove to be true. In a Word, In such a Case as this is, it is a Wise Man's Part, rather to believe upon slight Evi'ence, than to dis-believe upon great Presumptions.

Bioph. I am beholden to you for the Friendly Caution you give me: But it is your Reasons I expect at this time, and not your Advice.

Sebast. Those you shall have presently; and do not think I trifle with you, or decline the Proof I promised, because I proceed thus gradually and slowly with you: The true Reason whereof is, because I would rather your own Prudence should incline you to believe, than that my Arguments should press you to it; and I much more desire that you should be safe, than that I should have the *Glory* of a *Victory*. It is only *your Concern* that we go upon; have therefore a little Patience, that we may rightly understand one another; and since you have refused Scripture-proof, give me leave to ask you particularly, what kind of *proof* you expect of this Matter under *our Consideration*.

In the first place, I hope you do not require Sensible Evidence of a Day of Judgment. You were saying even now, that no Man had seen Heaven, and therefore you did not believe it. Possibly, those Words slipped from you unadvisedly. However, it is (you know) a Thing future which we are now debating about; and *Sensible Proof* cannot be required of that, without flat *Contradiction*. It is as if a Man should desire to see that which confessedly is not to be seen; and that a Thing should be that is not, or be and not be at the same time. You know you cannot have Sensible Evidence to Day, that the Sun will rise to Morrow: In short, neither of any thing past, nor future; but only of that which is present.

What kind of Proof, and what Measure of Evidence is to be expected in the Principles of Religion.

There

There are some Men in this Age, and perhaps you may be acquainted with them, who will only appeal to their Senses; and accordingly, they reject the Notion of God, and of Spirits, merely because they can see no such things. Now, if I thought this were your Opinion I must go another Way to work than I intended: But if it will content you that I make the Point seem reasonable and clear to the Eyes of your Mind, tho' I do not gratifie your Bodily Eyes with a strange Prospect, then I will proceed as I designed.

Bioph. Well, we are agreed for that. I did, I confess, speak of seeing Heaven, but there was no Contradiction in that; because if there be any such Place, it is supposed to be constantly existent, and therefore may be visible: Yet I do not expect to see the Judgment, till the Time comes; because Futures are not to be seen, but fore-seen. Go on therefore, and give me Rational Evidence, and it shall suffice.

Sebast. But there is another thing I desire to be resolved of; namely, What Measure or Degree of Rational Evidence you will be satisfied with? The Reason of my Enquiry is this: Some Men there are, who highly pretend to a Readiness to believe upon just Grounds; but when it comes to Trial, they are humourfome and captious; they will require such Evidence as the Nature of the Thing cannot admit of, (even supposing it to be true;) they expect such Proof as shall leave no room for Cavil and Exception, such as a Man can find no Evasion from, but that will extort an Assent from him, whether he will or no. Now I must tell you, this is very hard and unreasonable in any Case whatsoever; for,

as much as the Wit of Man is fitter to pull down, than to build up; and it is the easiest thing in the World to find Shifts and Cavils: Infomuch that he must believe very little indeed, that will admit of nothing which some slight Objection or other may be made against. God himself hath provided no Remedy for Contumacy; and such Men must go on, and perish without Cure; for no Argument can escape a captious Humour.

Besides, if such strict Demands of Satisfaction were at any Time allowable, yet can they by no Means be reasonably insisted upon in such a Case as this; for if such irresistible Evidence were to be had in this Matter, there would be no room for Vertue; it would then be a necessary Action to believe, and no Instance of Choice, nor any Argument of a vertuous Mind: For what can be the Praise or Rewardableness of doing that *which* a Man cannot chuse but do; Or what Excellency is there in Faith, when there is no Pretence in the World for Unbelief?

Therefore all that you can justly and wisely expect in the present Case, is, That there be sufficient Ground given you for a discreet Choice; and Over-weight enough in one Scale to incline the Judgment of a prudent Man so far, that he shall see it is more reasonable that he believe, than that he do not. This is very properly to be esteemed Conviction of our Reason, this is the just Standard of Prudence, and this is the Principle that wise Men govern themselves by in weighty Affairs. And, indeed if no Man should determine himself to the Pursuit of a Business; until there were no Objection, no Excuse, Colour, or Pretence to the contrary, all the noblest

blest Projections, and most profitable and necessary Undertaking of Mankind, would be nipped and blasted in the Bud.

Bioph. In truth, I do not see but your Demand is reasonable; and I must yield to you in this Particular also.

Sebast. Then I ask no more.

In order to the Satisfaction of a Man's Judgment, he must first come to Indifference.

Phil. Yes, *Sebastian*, let me put you in mind of one thing more; which is, That *Biophilus* will promise you to hold the Scales even; otherwise, an over-weight in either of them will not

be discernible. My meaning is, That he agree to be sincerely indifferent; and willing to believe on the one side, as well as on the other: For I have found by my own Experience, that whilst a Man retains a partial Fondness for an *Opinion*, it is not all the Arguments in the *World* shall beat him out of it; he will see all that which makes for him as through a *Magnifying-Glass*; and so think it great and considerable; and contrariwise, all that which is against him shall seem little and despicable. But when a Man comes to this pass, that he is content one side should be true as well as the other, then (and not till then) the best Reason will carry it. Therefore unless you premise this, you will strive against the Stream, and dispute in vain.

Sebast. Thank you heartily for that, *Philander*. It is very true, *Biophilus*, that if you oppose Resolution and Prejudice against the Discourse I am to make to you, that will be *Armour of Proof* against all the Arguments that can be brought; and then we had as good stay here, as go farther and lose our Labour.

But

But why, good *Biophilus*, should you not lie as far towards the Doctrine which I am asserting, as towards the contrary?

Nay, Why should you not look upon it as greatly your Interest, that there should be another World, and a Judgment at the

It is greatly a Man's Intere est that Religion should be true.

End of this? It is certain, you and all of us must die, there is no peradventure in that; and it were a most sad and dismal thing to think of it, if Death put an utter End to a Man, so that all his Comforts, and all his Hopes expire with him. And I wonder in my Heart how any Man can think of Death with any Measure of *Patience* upon those Terms; and that it doth not make him sullen and melancholy all the Days of his Life. You will say, he must yield to Necessity: But that is a Remedy worse than the Disease; (if it be possible) to seek a Cure for Death in Desperation. To tell me there is a Necessity of dying, is only to tell me there is no Help in the Case; which is the very thing I complain of.

And this Consideration is so much the more sharp and cutting, by how much the more a Man's Life hath been pleasant and comfortable. As for a Man that hath all his Life-time been oppressed with Calamities, pinched with Poverty, covered with Obliquy, or afflicted with horrible Pains, &c. it may seem easie to him to die, that so he might have that Rest in the Grave, which he could not have above Ground; and tho he thinks he shall be sensible of no Comfort there, yet he shall fare as well as other Men in that State. But for him that hath had good Treatment in the *World*, pleasant *Accommodations*, tempting Fortunes and Enjoyments; for

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such

such a Man to think of Death, which will spoil him of all his Ornaments, and level him with the Dust; that will interrupt all his Delights, put an End to all his Designs and Projections, and draw a dark Veil over all his Glories. I say, if such a Man hath nothing to comfort him against Death, if there be no Life after this, but a Man must for ever forsake, and be forsaken of all his Felicities, I cannot see how he can possibly avoid an unspeakable Abhorrence of it, nay, that's not all neither; for, methinks it should render all his present Enjoyments, not only insipid and loathsome, but even a very *Torment* to him, whilst he is in the midst of them.

Now, Why should any Man resist the only Remedy in this Case, the only Consolatory against the Summ of all Calamities; which is, the Hopes of another Life? Why should he be willing to die as the Beast dies, and to abandon himself to the Grave, to Rottenness, and Oblivion? It were certainly better never to have been born, than both to live in perpetual fear of dying, and being dead, to be as if a Man had never lived: Better never to have tasted the Sweets of Life, than to be only tantalized; and by that time he begins to live, to begin to die; and then be eternally deprived of what he just had a Smack and a Sight of.

Nay, farther yet; If a Man had lived only like a Beast, it had been no great matter to die like a Beast: If, I say, a Man looked no farther than his Fodder, had no Sense of any thing but Eating and Drinking, and had a Soul in him that served only for Salt to keep the Body from Putrefaction, so that he never looked about him, made no Improvement of himself, and had no
Designs

Designs in his Head, it were less matter if he returned to the Earth, which (like a Mole) he did nothing but root in, and turn over, whilst he was upon it. But for a Man of an active Soul, of improved parts, of *Reason*, and *Wisdom*, and *Usefulness*, to be smothered in the Grave; so that all his Notions and Discoveries, all Arts and Sciences; nay, all his Vertues and Gallantry of Mind, all his Hopes and Designs, shall be abruptly broken off, and buried in Oblivion; this is so sad and dismal a thing, that it is able to discourage all Study and Industry, all Care and Culture of a Man's life: For, Why should I strive to live like a Man, if I must die like a Beast? Why should I take pains to know, when *by increasing Knowledge, I should but increase my Sorrow*? For as much as the more I know, the more I shall feel my self miserable; and, indeed, become guilty of my own Torment. So that if there were no Hopes after this present Life, it would be a more advisable Course for a Man to abandon himself to the most dark and squalid Barbarism, rather than to weary and wear out himself in the Quest of Knowledge; and better never to apply himself to any Study, or to bestow any Pains or Cost upon himself; nay, indeed, if it were possible, it were desirable never to know any thing, or to think at all. For, Why should a Man put a Cheat upon himself? Why should he take, not only *unprofitable*, but *vexatious* Pains? In a word, Why should he not so live, as he must die? To all which add, That if there were indeed no other *World*, nor Life hereafter, and if there be any Man that can find in his Heart to be fond of living upon those Terms, he must of necessity be a pitiable Slave

whilst he continues here: the perpetual Fears of Death cramping him, and keeping him in continual Bondage, that he shall not have the Spirit or Courage to dare to do any brave Action; but contrariwise, he will be unavoidably tempted to be a wretched Coward, and base Fellow; and become a sordid Parasite, to flatter and humour every Body, merely upon the Account of Self-preservation.

Why therefore should any Man be fond of such an uncomfortable, nay, such a sottish and debasing Opinion? Why should not a Man chuse rather to erect his own Mind, and be willing to hope well of himself, by cherishing an Expectation that he may survive his Body, and live eternally.

Biophi. There is no Question, *Sebastian*, but that Living for ever is very desirable, if a Man could hope for such a thing absolutely, and not clogged with Conditions. As for Death it self, that would have no great matter of *Formidableness* in it, if it be either (as I suppose it) a perfect Intercision of all Sense; or, much less, if it were (as the Men of your Persuasion use to speak) only a dark Passage to another Light. But the Mischief is, that upon your *Hypothesis*, a Judgment must pass upon a Man first, before he can arrive at that other Life. Now that is the terrible thing; if I were rid of the Danger of that, it would (as you say well) be my Interest to believe all the rest, in spite of all Objections to the contrary.

Sebast. I do not design to impose upon you; for it is very true, there is no Passage into the other World, without undergoing a Test or Trial, whether we be fit for Eternal Life, or no.
And

And it is most certain also, that if a Man die an impious, a base and wicked Person, it were better for him that either he had not been born, or else that the *Grave* and *Oblivion* might cover him to all Eternity. But what need this fright any Man whilst he is alive, and may provide himself accordingly? Especially since the Grace of God puts it in our Choice and Power to be good, and so qualified, that we may be out of all danger of miscarrying in the Judgment.

For, *Biophilus*, Can it be thought that God Almighty should seek the Ruine of his *Creatures*? Or that he can have any Delign upon them, to make them eternally miserable? If he had, there would not be the Solemnities of a Day of Judgment; for he would not need to insnare us in Forms of Law, but might, without more ado, have destroyed us when he pleased; and who could resist him, or dispute the Case with him? Undoubtedly, he is too great a Majesty to have any little Ends to serve, and therefore we can suspect no Hurt from him; and there could be nothing but the Overflowings of his own Goodness, that provoked him to make us at the first; and therefore there can be nothing of *Envy*, *Malignity*, or *Crucity* in any of his Counsels and Designs about us.

And that all these are not mere Sayings, or Sanguine Conjectures of mine, but real Truth, (besides all other Ways of Probation) you may be assured by this Consideration; That in all God's Demands from us, as the Terms and Conditions of our *Happiness*; or (which is all one) in all the *Duties* he requires at our *Hands*, and in all the *Obligations of Religion*, there is nothing severe and discouraging, nothing ex-

tremely harsh and difficult, much less impossible. Nay, in truth, if Things be rightly considered, I believe there will be nothing to be found in any Institution of Religion that ever was heard of in the World, that could go so much against the Grain with Men, as to tempt them to run the hazard of dying eternally, rather than to comply with it. And if any such were to be found, it were Ground enough to assure us, that such Institutions proceeded not from God: For such is his Wisdom and Benignity, that he can impose nothing as a severe Task-Master, purely to abridge our Liberty, or to break our Spirits, and oppress our Powers; but only to raise and improve us according to our utmost Capacities, and as necessary Methods to train us up as Candidates for Eternal Life.

I will not deny but there are some Restraints put upon us, and some Difficulties we must expect to encounter; otherwise Religion would have no Excellency in it, nor could we have either the Glory, or the Pleasure, in obtaining our End and Happiness, if it were won without Sweat and Labour. But I do confidently assert, that these Difficulties (whatever they are) we shall find just Reason to undergo with all Cheerfulness, if we do but compare what Religion promises, with what it commands or imposes. And as for the *Christian Religion* in particular, all this which I have said is so remarkably true of that, that if any thing hath been represented as a Branch and necessary Duty thereof, which is of a contrary Nature to what I have now supposed, I do not doubt, with great Ease, to make it appear, that such Suggestion is either a palpa-
ble

ble Mistake, or a notorious Scandal. Why then, I say, should a Man think either so ill of God, or of himself, as to be afraid or unwilling to fall into his Hands? You cannot fore-bode any Evil from him, if you are satisfied that he is perfect and happy, full and glorious, just and good; and therefore you must condemn yourself of prodigious Folly, in not complying with reasonable and equitable Laws, and of being wilfully accessary to your own Calamity, if you dare not undergo his Judgment. So that, upon the whole Matter, there can be no Reason, why you should be unwilling to believe there is such a thing: And that is all I desire of you at present, and I heartily conjure you to be true to your self herein.

Bioph. Well, I am resolved to be as indifferent as it is possible to be: Now therefore prove it.

Sebast. That I will do with all possible Plainness and Sincerity; namely, I will make good that there is sufficient Reason to

The Moral Demonstration of a Judgment to come.

incline a prudent Man to expect and believe, that, after this Life, God Almighty will call Men to Account, and judge them according to their former Actions and Behaviour.

Now, you know it is the nature of Moral Arguments, not to depend upon one single Evidence; but to consist of the united Force of several Considerations. Accordingly, my present Proof of a Judgment to come (as aforesaid) must comprise these Three Particulars.

First, I will shew, That the Nature and Condition of Mankind is such, as to render him fit and capable to come to an Account, and to undergo such a Judgment as we speak of.

Secondly, That it is very agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God (according to those Notions which we have of him) that he should call Mankind to such an Account, and judge them.

Thirdly, That God Almighty actually exercises and displays such a Providence in this present World, as gives Earnest before-hand, that he really intends to judge it hereafter.

These Three Things make Way for, and succeed each other naturally; and all together, amount to a full Proof of the Point in hand. Wherefore, when I have opened and made them out severally, in the Order I have laid them down, I will leave it to you to collect the Result of them.

First, I say, the Nature and Condition of Mankind is such, as renders him capable of undergoing a Judgment in another World; and therefore it is reasonable that he expect it accordingly. This will appear by the Instances following.

Mankind is of such a Nature, and endued with such Powers, as make it reasonable for him to expect Judgment.

In the first place, It is notorious, that Mankind is endued with a large and comprehensive Mind, which is not confined to the mere Objects of his Senses, and Things present before him; but hath a vast Scope, and Prospect; by means of which, he surveys the Universe, embraces the whole World, and takes within his Verge, as well Things past and Things to come as those that are present; which no other Creature is capable of but himself. The Beast hath no kind of Notice of, or Concern for what was in former Time, nor no Sollicitude about what may

may come after ; but only applies it self to the present Exigencies or Conveniences of the Body. But Man is very curious and inquisitive into History, and how Things passed of old, long before he was born ; and is also very thoughtful and anxious what may befall hereafter, when he shall be dead and gone. Now, this one Consideration alone makes him look as if he were a Being that were concerned in the whole Frame of Nature, and in all the Revolutions of Providence, and, at least, of more Consequence than to be a mere Pageant for the short Time of this Life ; or a Mushroom, to shoot out of the Earth, and return to it again, and so be as if it had never been.

Besides, We may observe, That the Mind of Man doth not only consider the absolute Nature of Things, as they lie singly and severally before it ; but compares them together, and estimates their relative Natures, the mutual Respects that they have to each other, and the various Aspects and Influences they have upon each other ; and so comparing and conferring Things together, raises Observations, makes Inferences, deduces Conclusions, frames general Maxims ; thereby brings Things into Order and Method, and raises Arts and Sciences. All, or any of which Things, no Creature below himself makes any Pretence to or gives any Token of. From whence we may conclude, not only the Pre-eminence of Nature, but that he is ordained to higher Purposes.

Moreover, Mankind is endowed with Liberty of Choice, and Freedom of Will ; by virtue of which, he doth not only move himself by his own internal Principles, and vital Energy ; but also

also can determine himself to this Object, or that; and either presume or desist the Prosecution at his own Pleasure. Insomuch that he is neither carried by the Swinge of any superior Causes, nor fatally allured by the powerful Charms of any Objects from without; no, nor by the Efficacy of any Arguments arising therefrom; nor any Impression whatsoever (saving that of God Almighty) can over-bear or supersede his own Resolution, but that he can act or desist, suspend Prosecution, or pursue his own Choice; and apply himself to this Object, or that; and follow this Argument and Motive, or the other: He hath such an Helm within himself, that he can sail against Wind and Tide; he can move himself in a Calm, and stay himself in a Storm: In a Word, He can move which Way, when, and how far he will; and stop his own Career when he pleases. The *Truth* of this we find by daily Experience; and we commonly please our selves too much in this Privilege of our Natures. We see that which is better, and follow that which we know to be worse: We hear Arguments, and reject them, because we will do so; we are persuaded to the contrary, and yet go on; and when and whatsoever we act, we find at the same time we could have done quite contrary if we had pleased. Other Creatures either act merely as they are acted by superior Causes, drawn by invisible Wyers, or fatally inclined by the Objects and Motives before them: But we are put into the Hand of our own Counsels, and wholly govern'd by our selves, as to our inward Resolutions and Determinations. Now this, as it is a mighty Discrimination of our Natures from theirs, so it hath
this

this peculiar Effect, that it renders a Man's Actions properly his own, and imputable to himself, and to nothing else; and consequently, fits him to undergo a Judgment for them.

But further yet: To make Mankind more capable of a Judgment, he hath a directive Rule, or Law of Reason within him, whereby to govern himself, both in his Elections, and Prosecutions; that is, he acts not only freely and undeterminately in respect of any Cause without himself; but he hath a Light within, to guide and direct those free Powers of his, that they may not run riot, and move extravagantly; by the Means of which he is enabled both to make choice of his Designs, and to select fit and proper Methods of accomplishing them. For, as he is not staked down to some one particular Business, (as generally other Creatures are) but hath great Scope to expatiate in, and Variety to please himself withal; so he hath a Card and Compass given him to sail by in that vast Ocean which lies before him: That is, he hath a Faculty of discerning the difference of Things; and consequently, can judge what is worthy to be propounded as his Post and Design, and also to measure and adjust the Means thereunto; which renders him more fit to give an Account, both of his Elections and Persecutions.

Nay, father yet, Humane Nature, by the Advantage of this Light within him, hath not only a Capacity of apprehending and judging of Natural Good and Evil, or such Things as are only pleasant and profitable, or the contrary; but hath also Notions of higher Good and Evil, which we commonly call Moral; that is, he finds himself obliged to have regard to something

thing else besides, and better than his Body, namely either to the *Deity*, or to the *Community of Mankind*; or, at least, to his own better Part, his Soul and Mind. None of which are at all consider'd by any Creatures below Man: And there is hardly any part of Mankind, (at least, that deserve to be so esteemed) which doth not think it self concern'd in all these. For we see, whosoever hath any thing of a Man in him, doth think some Actions to become, or not become him respectively, merely as he is a Man; which would admit of no difference, but be all alike in a Beast. Whereupon it is, that a Man cannot dispense with himself in the doing of several things which are in his power to do; no, not in the Dark, and the greatest Privacy; because every Man that in any measure understands himself, hath a Reverence of himself; and the Effect of this betrays it self in that quick Sense which Mankind hath peculiarly of Shame and Honour: Which argues him to be accountable to something higher than his Senses.

Above all this, It is considerable, that Mankind hath not only a speculative Apprehension of Moral Good and Evil, but a practical and very quick and pungent Sense of it, which we call Conscience; by which he not only remembers and calls to mind whatsoever hath pass'd him, but reflecting also upon the Ends and Circumstances of his own Actions, and comparing what he hath done, both for Matter and Manner, either with the Rule of Reason within him, or some other Law, he censures and judges himself accordingly: If he hath done well and virtuously; that is, hath approved himself to himself, he then applauds and comforts himself,
and

and feels an unspeakable Satisfaction in his own Mind. As for Example, If a Man have behaved himself gallantly towards his Prince and Country; if he have carried himself ingenuously and gratefully towards his Friends, his Patrons, or Benefactors; if he have been beneficent to any part of Mankind; if he have demonstrated Love to God, or Goodness, and good Men; if he have restrained his own Rage and Passions; if he have rescued an Innocent from the Hand of the Oppressor, or done any thing of like nature, the Heart of every Man naturally, in such a Case, feels such an inward Delight as sweetens his Spirits, and cheers his very Countenance. On the contrary, If he have been false, treacherous and ingrateful; if he have been cruel and oppressive, or have said or done any base thing, he is presently upbraided, accused, condemned and tormented by himself. Now, What is all this but *Præjudicium*, a kind of Anticipation of the Judgment to come?

But if any Man shall pretend this thing call'd *Conscience*, which we now speak of, to be no Natural Endowment of *Humanity*, but only the Effect of Custom and Education; such a Person may easily undeceive himself, if he will but consider, that all this which I have spoken of *Conscience*, both as to the Matter and Form of it, (or *Synteresis* and *Syneidesis*, as learned Men are wont to distinguish) is so universal to all Mankind, (at least, that have not done Violence to themselves) that it can with no Colour be imputed to Education, but must be resolved into the very Nature and Sense of the Soul. And moreover, a different *Notion* and *Apprehension* of the fore-mentioned Particulars is so deeply implanted

planted in the Minds of Men, that it is impossible any contrary Custom or Education should absolutely and totally efface it; therefore it is the Sense of Nature, and consequently a Prefage of the Divine Judgment.

To all which add in the last place, That the Mind of Man seems plainly to be above the Body, and independent of it; for as much as we see, that not only our Reason, and the Powers of our Souls, are so far from decaying with the Body, that contrariwise, they grow more strong and vigorous by those very Causes which impair the Body; I mean, by Age, Exercise and Experience. Besides, it is easily observable, that our Souls do, as often as they please, act quite contrary to the Intrests and Inclinations of our Bodies, and frequently control the Passions thereof, as well as correct and over-rule the Verdict of our Senses: Therefore it is not at all probable that they should perish with our Bodies, but survive to some further Purposes; especially if we take in what I intimated before, namely, the Consideration of the Shortness of the Time of this Life; which is so very inconsiderable for so excellent a Being as the Soul to display it self in, that it seems unworthy of all the aforesaid Perfections, and more unworthy of the Contrivance of that Wisdom which made us, to order it so; unless it be, that Mankind is placed here only in a State of Probation, and is to be tried hereafter, in order to a more lasting Subsistence and Duration. Which, in consideration of all the Premises, he cannot but be thought capable of; at least, if there be a Judge as fit to judge him, as he is fit to undergo a Judgment. Which brings me to my Second Branch.

Bioph. Hold a little, I pray, good *Sebastian*: You have spoken many Things well and worthily, of the Pre-eminence of Humane Nature; and some of them such as are not only sufficient to erect a Man's Spirits, and to provoke him to hope well of himself; but also do render it in some sort probable, that we are designed for some higher Uses than we commonly apply our selves to. Nevertheless, you have not reached your Point; nor will all you have said attain the End you propounded, unless you go farther, and prove the Soul of Man to be a Spirit, or Immaterial Substance, (as the Men of your *Way* are wont to speak;) that so there may be a plain Foundation for its Existence out of the Body. Without which, let it be as excellent a Being as it can, and adorned with as many other Perfections as you can imagine, it cannot be capable of standing at a Tribunal, and undergoing such a Judgment in another World as we are speaking of.

Sebast. I could have wished you would have given me leave to lay all the Parts of my Argument together before you, that so you might have taken a View of it entire, and all at once; and then you might have objected as you should have seen Cause. But however, I will comply with your Method: And as to that which you have thought fit now to interpose, I answer these two Things.

First, I say, It is not necessary to the Business in hand, that the Soul be proved to be strictly immaterial, and capable of existing and acting out of the Body; for as much as at the Day of Judgment I suppose the Body shall be raised again: And then, if it should be so, that all the Powers

Powers of the Soul were laid a sleep by Death, until that Time; yet now, upon a Re-union with their proper Organs, they would revive again. So that I did not, in my Proof, fall short of the Mark I aimed at; but you out-shoot the Point in your Demand: For, whether the Soul be a Spiritual Substance or no, so long as those Perfections which we have enumerated belong to it, there is nothing wanting to make it capable of undergoing a Judgment. But,

Secondly, To speak my own Mind plainly, and to come home to your Satisfaction, I must tell you, That as for my part, I do not doubt but that the Soul of Man is, properly and strictly, of a Spiritual Nature; so I am

*The Soul of Man
proved to be imma-
terial.*

confident that those Things which we have ascribed to it, do sufficiently prove it to be so; seeing it is impossible to salve those *Phenomena*, or to give any tolerable Account of those great *Accomplishments* and Performances of the Soul before specified from mere Matter, let it be modified or circumstantiated how it can.

Simple Perception of Objects is of the lowest Rank of Humane Perfections; and, indeed, is not proper to Humane Nature, but common to Brutes; yet this seems impossible to be performed by mere Matter. For the Eye, tho it be a very admirable and exquisite Organ, can by no means be said to perceive the Objects of Sight, but only to transmit or present them to some Perceptive Power: It doth, I say, only as a Glass, represent the Species or Image of the Thing; which even a dead Eye, or an Hole, will in some measure perform; but it makes no Judgment of the Object at all, as appears by this, that

that all Objects are transmitted, reversed, or with the Heels upward, through the Eye, and so left, till some higher Powers set them right, and on their Legs, and judges of their Distance, and other Circumstances.

Now, if it be so, that Matter thus advantageously disposed and improved, as in the admirable Structure of the Eye, cannot perform that one Act of Simple Perception, what shall become of all *those nobler Actions of the Soul*? And into what shall they be resolved? Such as *Self-motion*, the strange *Celerity of Thought*, *Memory* of that which is past, Prudence and Fore-cast for that which is to *come*, and a Thousand other strange Operations. Is it imaginable that mere Matter should understand, argue, dispute, consider and confer the Relation of one Thing to another; and thence infer Consequences, and make Conclusions? Is it likely that mere Body and Quantity should be sensible of Shame and Honour; nay be conscientious too, and accuse, condemn and torture it self; or, which is most wonderful of all, check, controul, deny, limit and mortifie it self? He that will undertake to shew how all these Things may be performed by Atoms and Motion only, is a subtile Mechanist indeed; and I do not doubt but, at the same rate, such a Man may be able to make a new World when he pleases, with the same Atoms as Materials. For it is evident, there is more Intricacy in this little World of Man, than in the whole Fabrick of Heaven and Earth besides.

Wherefore, if Matter or Body cannot perform the aforesaid Operations; then the Soul of Man, which doth perform them, must be acknowledged to be a Spiritual Substance.

Bioph. In troth, you talk very shrewdly ; but for my Life, I cannot understand what you mean by this Thing which you call Spirit ; and therefore I reject the Notion, as Gibberish and Non-sense.

Sebast. Softly good *Biophilus* : What Reason is there for that hasty Conclusion ? Must we needs deny every such Thing to be, as is hard to understand ? Must we, like dull Boys, tear out the Lesson that is difficult to Learn ? Is nothing true, but what is easie ; nor possible but what is facile ? But besides, let me tell you, upon second Thoughts, there is not more Difficulty in understanding the Nature of Spirits, than there is in conceiving how all the aforesaid Operations should be performed with them ; no, nor half so much neither : So that nothing is gotten by the Objection ; for it is a very vain Thing to object Difficulty, when at the same time you are forced to acknowledge the Thing to be necessary. But why, I pray you ; what is the Cause that Spiritual Substance is not as intelligible as Corporeal ?

Bioph. O Sir, there is a vast Difference in the Case : I can see and feel the latter, but so I cannot the former.

Sebast. Nay, believe me, there you are out : You see and feel only the Accidents of a Bodily Substance, but not the Substance it self, no more than you can see or feel a Spirit.

Bioph. Pardon me ; at least, I see and feel the Bodily Substance by the Accidents ; that is, I am assured of its Presence and Existence, and I can affirm such Things of it upon that Testimony of my Senses.

Sebast.

Sebast. And you may affirm as much of a Soul, (if you please) tho you can neither see nor feel it; forasmuch as you plainly perceive the Properties and operations of it.

Bioph. That is close, and to the purpose, I confess; but still I cannot tell what to make of this Thing call'd Spirit, for I can frame no Image of it in my Imagination, as I can do of other Things.

Sebast. Why, there is it now, I perceive now, *Biophilus*, you have a Desire to see with your Mouth, and hear with your Eyes. For, as reasonably every jot may you expect to do either of those, as to frame a sensible Imagination of a Spirit. That which we call Imagination, (you know) is nothing else but the Impress of the Colour, Bigness or some other Accidents (of a thing that hath been presented to our Senses) retained in, and (it may be) a little diversified by our Fancy. But now, if a Spirit have no Colour nor Bulk, nor such other Accidents, to be represented to our Fancy, through our outward Senses, how is it possible you should have any Image of it there? No, no; Spiritual Beings are only capable of affording us an Intellectual Idea; namely, our higher Faculty of Reason, from Observation of their Effects and operations, concludes their Essence, and takes an Estimate of their Nature: And, indeed, it is a flat Contradiction to require any other Evidence of that kind of Beings.

Bioph. This kind of Discourse is very subtle, and I cannot tell what to object farther to it: Go on therefore to your Second Branch; perhaps there I may better Cope with you.

Sebast. The Second Step which I take towards the Proof of a *Judgment to come*,

The natural Notions Men have of God, render it reasonable to expect that he will judge the World.

is, That as on the one side, Mankind appears to be fit and capable of being judged hereafter; so on the other hand, it is agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God, and to those

Notions we have of a Deity, that he should call the World to such an Account. And this appears briefly thus:

The most common and most natural Notion which men have of the *Divine Majesty*, is, That he is a *Being absolutely perfect*; that is, (amongst other Accomplishments) that he is a most powerfull, wise, just and good being: There is hard, any Body that thinks of a God, but considers him under these *Attributes and Perfections*; and he that divests him of any of these Perfections, renders him neither an Object of Fear, nor of Love; and consequently, not a God: Insomuch that were it not for Politick Ends, namely, to avoid Infamy, or other Punishment, amongst Men, doubtless, those that deny to him any of these Attributes, had as good flatly deny him to have any Being at all.

Now, if these things be included in the natural Notion of God, they not only capacitate him to be a Judge of the World, if he pleases; but give great Assurance that he will do it. For, if he be a wise Being, he cannot but see how Things go; and particularly, how his Creatures carry themselves here below. If he be powerful, he hath it in his Hand to rectifie those Disorders he observes amongst them; and both to punish the Evil, and to reward the Good. And

if he be good and just, it cannot but be expected from him, that he will set Things to rights one Time or other, when his Wisdom shall think fit. But it is evident, this is not done exactly, and answerably to those Attributes of his, in this World; therefore there is no Reason to doubt, but he will assuredly do it in another World: And therefore the Scripture tells us, *He hath appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, &c.*

Bioph. Not too fast, good *Sebastian*. I know not certainly what Apprehensions other Men may have; but for my part, tho I do acknowledge a God, (and that not only politically (as you suspect) but upon the principles of Reason) yet I must profess to you, I do not think the natural Notion of God includes those Attributes you speak of. Why may there not be a God, and he only a necessary Agent? And then there is no danger of an After-reckoning with him.

Sebast. Ah, *Biophilus*, I am heartily sorry to find so unworthy a Notion of God still to find any Room in your Thoughts, (tho it were but in Suspicion only.) It is very certain indeed, that if he be only a necessary Agent, then all Fear of a Judgment is discharged; and as certain, that all Religion can then be nothing else but a groundless Superstition at the best. For, then God must needs be a very tame Deity, which Men may play withal, and abuse at pleasure; as the Frogs did by their Wooden King in the Fable.

God not a necessary Agent.

But then, in the Name of Goodness, what need is there of any God at all, if a necessary Agent

Agent will serve the turn? Why can we not as well suppose the World to be Eternal, as make such a contemptible Being as a necessary Agent is, to be eternal, only to give Beginning to the World.

Or rather, why if we attribute one Perfection, *i. e.* Eternity, to him, why not all the rest, which seem to be inseparable from it! For as much as it is not imaginable how the first Cause should be the meanest of all; and he that gave those other Perfections to other Things, should be destitute of them himself.

Or, How can we believe that such a fetter'd, impotent, unthinking, and unwise Being should make a World in that Beauty and Perfection which this World consists of? Or, at least, how is it possible, that a natural or necessary Agent (which is like a Gally-Slave chained down to his Bench and confin'd to his Task and Subject) should make a World with such Curiosity and Diversity of Things, yet with that exquisite Order and Harmony which we observe in Nature?

Do you think that the Frame of things could not possibly have been any otherwise than they are? Can you fantasie that nothing could have been better nor worse than it is now? If you see any Foot-steps of Wisdom or Choice, any Possibility that any thing should have been otherwise than it is, you fore-go your necessary Agent.

Do you not see great and manifest Instances of Design and Contrivance in the *Order of Things*, *viz.* one Thing fitted to another, and one subordinate to another, and all together conspiring to some publick End and Use? Now, sure a necessary Agent could not guide Things so, because it hath no Ends or Designs of its own.

Again,

Again, If God be a necessary Agent I would fain be resolved how it came to pass that we are not so too? I think you granted me even now, that we chuse our own Way, propound Ends to our selves and voluntarily pursue them, when we could (if we pleased) as freely chuse and act contrary; and this we justly glory in, as the Perfection of our Nature. Now how to conceive that I should be a free Agent, and that he who made me so should be a necessary one; that is that the Effect should be more excellent than the cause, neither I, nor (as I suspect) any Body else can understand.

But I need not in this place industriously set my self to confute this odd Conceit of God's being only a necessary Agent, because in my third Branch I shall fundamentally undermine it, and (as I think) leave neither Colour nor Pretence for it; and therefore with your Leave, I now hasten to that.

Bioph. Go on then, in God's Name.

Sebast. My Third and last Point for the *Proof* of a Judgment to come is this; God doth actually exercise such a Providence in and over the *World* for the present, as gives great Assurance that he will judge it hereafter: For these

There is an Actual Providence in this World: Therefore there will be a Judgment in the next.

are, as it were, the two several Ends of the same Chain; a *Providence* here and a Judgment hereafter: They do naturally and mutually draw on each other. If there be a Judgment to come, there must be a Provident Eye over the *World* for the present, in order to it; that is, God must so mind the *World*, that he perfectly understand how Things go, how

Men carry themselves, what there is amiss amongst them, what requires Punishment, and what deserves a Reward ; otherwise he cannot be said to judge, forasmuch as, without this, it might rather be said, There is a Day of Execution coming, than a Day of Judgment. And on the other side, if there be a Providence in this World, and it be true that God observes how Men carry themselves *towards him*, it must speak his Intention to reward and punish hereafter, in proportion to such Observation ; for other wise, that Providence would be fruitless, and to no purpose ; it would be a mere Matter of vain Curiosity, and a needless Trouble to the *Divine Majesty*, as the *Epicureans* objected. But now, that God doth exercise such a providence in this *World*, as from whence we may reasonably preface a Judgment to come, I think will abundantly appear by these three things.

1. There hath been such a Thing as we call Prophecy, or Prediction of Things before they came to pass ; which cannot be without a Providence.

2. There have been Miracles ; which could not be without the *Divine Interposition*.

3. There are frequent (tho not altogether miraculous) Instances in all Ages, of a *Divine Presence* in, and Influence upon, the Affairs of the World.

Prophecy a certain Argument of a Providence in the World.

1. First, I ground the Assertion of a *Providence* in this present *World* upon the Prophecies and predictions of Things before hand, which have been verified by real Effects in their respective Times and Seasons. It is evident, that whosoever is

able

able Certainly to fore-tell Things before they are, must see through all the Series of Causes which Produce such Events; especially, if he define also the Precise Time, and other Circumstances of the accomplishment; But above all, whosoever shall declare before-hand, not only what shall come to pass according to the Course of natural and necessary Causes, but also such Things as are casual and contingent, or subject to the Choice and Indifferency of free and voluntary Agents, must have a mighty Reach with him, and make a very curious and accurate Inspection into the Conjunctions and Conspiracy of all Things, as well as into their Particular Natures, Tendencies, and Inclinations: For, as every Effect must have its Causes before it can be, so the Prediction of such Effect must depend upon a certain Knowledge of those respective Causes which are pregnant of it. Therefore if there ever have been such a Thing as Prophecy, there is a Providence.

Now for the Matter of Fact; or, that there have been certain and punctual Predictions of Things long before they came to pass, is the constant Belief of all Nations; and he that denies it, must give the Lye to the greatest and best part of Mankind. You may remember that *Tully* pursues this Argument in his Books, *De Divinatione*; and he there gives too many and too remarkable Instances of it, to be denied or eluded: But I shall chuse to set before you only two Passages out of the *Holy Scripture*, to this purpose. For, tho I perceive you have not such a Reverence for those Books as they deserve, yet such palpable Matters of Fact as I shall instance in, and which were of so publick
a Con-

a Concern, and general Notice, as whereupon the Revolution of whole Nations depended, can afford no Ground for calling in question the Historical Truth of them. And let me tell you, I make choice of these Instances out of those Writings, for no other Cause but for the Notoriety of the Fact, and the easiness of Confutation, if it had been otherwise than true.

The former of the two Passages is the Prediction of the Slavery of the Children of *Israel* in the Land of *Egypt*, and their miraculous Deliverance thence, above Four Hundred Years before it came to pass; and the Accomplishment (when the Time came) answering the Prediction precisely to a very Day, so as to be observed by the whole Body of the People; and the Remembrance of it perpetuated by an Anniversary Solemnity ever after: As you may see, *Exod. xij. 41.*

The other Instance is, the *Babylonish* Captivity, which was fore-told above Seventy Years before it came to pass; and that in a Time of the greatest unlikelihood that any such Calamity should befall; namely, it was prophesied of when the *Jews* were in the greatest Peace and Prosperity. And then for the Term of this Captivity, that was foretold to last Seventy Years, neither more nor less. And both these Periods (as well as other Circumstances) were exactly, and to Admiration, hit in the Event of Things.

Now in both these Instances, the Things were prophesied of so long before-hand, there were so many Obstacles in the Way of their Accomplishment, and so much of the Will of Man also interested in both the Cases; and yet notwithstanding, such punctual Exactness is to be seen in

in the Event, that it is plainly impossible that Humane Wit should so much as guess probably at them; therefore the *Predictions* must be grounded upon *Divine Intimation*: And then God is so far from being a necessary Agent, that it is apparent he minds the *World*, and looks narrowly into all the Parts of it, from one End to another, and governs and manages Inferiour Causes.

2. My Second Proof of an *Actual Providence* in this World, is, from Miracles. By a Miracle I mean anything coming to pass which is, either for the Matter or Manner of it, above the Power of natural Causes, or at least, contrary to their established Course and order; whether it be effected by heightning them above their ordinary Pitch, or accelerating their Motion, or by suddenly bringing those causes together which lay at a distance; or whether it be by depressing, suspending, or superseding any of them.

Miracles necessarily argue a Providence.

And I reason thus: If any thing have ever been brought to pass above the Capacity, or out of the Method of the natural and common Causes, then there is an Active Deity which exerts his Power in that Case. Or if ever the Course of Nature hath been interrupted, it must be by the Interposition of the Supreme Cause. For it is neither intelligible that Nature should go out of Course of it self, without its own Decay and Failure; nor possible that being once so out of Course, it should ever be able to recover it self into its former Order, without the help of *Omnipotency*. Therefore if ever there have been a Miracle in the *World*, there is *Proof of a Providence*.

Now

Now that such extraordinary Things as we here suppose, have happen'd, cannot be doubted without great Ignorance, or denied without Impudence. I know there is a sort of Witty Men, (in their Way) who endeavour to put a Slight upon Miracles, and therefore are very captious and critical in such Cases as this; but if they can elude some Occurrences that have been believed or pretended miraculous, yet they will never be able to evade them all. And if there have been but one acknowledg'd Miracle in all the Time of this World, it will be sufficient to prove a Providence. They will, perhaps, impute some *Cures* that have been said to be done by Miracle, to the Efficacy of some Medicine; altho they can neither tell us what that Specifick Remedy was nor much less tell us how the Symptoms should so suddenly cease upon the Use of it. It may be they will tell you in the general, (with Confidence enough) that the strange things done in *Egypt*, and in the Wilderness, were effected by the sudden Application of Actives to Passives; but cannot so much as pretend to satisfy any Man, how such remote Causes were brought together, and exalted to such an extraordinary Degree of Efficacy, as to produce such admirable Effects on the sudden as those Causes import.

Or if they could speak tolerable Sense in some of those Particulars, yet what natural Account can be given of the Raising of the Dead, or of Unlearned Men's speaking all kind of Languages in an Instant? What natural Cause will they assign of the Sun's standing still in *Joshua's* Time? Or of that preter-natural Eclipse at our Saviour's Passion? What could intercept the Sun's Light,
when

when the two Luminaries were in Opposition; Or what restored it to its Motion again, when it was interrupted, as in the former Instance? Or to its Light again, when it intermitted, as in the latter Instance? To endeavour to give natural Accounts of these Things, will prove as absurd and ridiculous to Reason, as to deny the matter of Fact is void of Faith and Religion.

But if any of these Instances will not pass with such Men because they were over long before our Time, or because the Truth of them depends upon the Authority of Scripture, there are other innumerable Passages in all Ages, not liable to that Exception, that cannot be resolved into any Cause less than a Supreme and Omnipotent. Amongst which, What will they say to this, which happens almost every Year; namely, That after a long wet Season, it shall suddenly clear up, and be Fair Weather again; And contrariwise, after a long dry Season, it shall unexpectedly be Wet and Rainy? Whereas, if they look only to Natural Causes, the quite contrary must happen: Forasmuch as the more Rain hath been at any Time, the more may be still; because there are the more Vapours, from whence clouds are raised: And the longer a dry Season hath lasted, there is every Day the less Reason to expect Rain; because there want Vapours, out of which it should be raised. Now, to impute this sudden and admirable Change only to the Winds, is to beg the Question; for it is well enough known, that the Winds depend upon Vapours, as well as Rain. And to ascribe it to the Stars, is to confess an humourful Resolution, that, right
or

or wrong, we will shut God out of the World. But this leads me to my

More ordinary Instances of a Providence in the World.

3. Third Proof of a present Providence, viz. From the more frequent and ordinary Instances of a Divine Influence upon the Affairs of the World. The Effects of which, tho they are not accounted miraculous, because they are common, yet they give sufficient Indication of Divine Administration. And of this kind there are so many which offer themselves to an *observant Mind*, that to seek Flaws, and go about to make *specious Objections* against some few of them, will be rather an-Argument of *resolved Unwillingness* to believe, than of any just Grounds of *Infidelity*. For, like as in a great Cable, made up of several smaller Cords, if perchance some of the Threads should flaw or break, yet the Remainder will be able to bear the Stress of whatsoever Use it shall be put to.

Now, under this Head I reckon, in the first place, as very observable, that there is scarcely any great thing ever brought about in the *World*, which *God* may not be seen to have an hand in: And that may be collected generally from the *Inadequateness* of the *visible Means* to most *notable Productions*. As, when great Preparations are defeated or laid aside, and mean and inconsiderable ones do the Business. This is that which *Solomon* observed long ago, *That the Battle is not to the Strong, nor the Race to the Swift, nor Bread to Men of Understanding*: And we cannot want an Example for it nearer hand, when we remember the Restoration of K. *Charles II.* For it pleased God to deal in that Particular, as he did by *Gideon's Army*, when he dismissed the greatest part

of the Forces, and did his business with a few, and those very unlikely for such an *Atchievement*.

But more admirable than this, is, the Preservation of the Holy Scripture in all Ages; both from total Abolition, by the Flames of Persecution; and from Corruption, by the capricious Fancies of such Men as would neither sincerely believe it, nor absolutely reject it. Such also is the Preservation of the *Christian Religion*, when all the Wit and all the Power of the World combined together against it: And such was the Success of the Apostles in propagating that Religion, and Planting the *Christian Church*; when a few *Fisher-men* leaven'd the World with a Doctrine quite against the Grain of it, and Naked Truth prevailed against Authority, Art and Interest, In Conjunction.

Hitherto also I reduce the Maintainance of Magistracy, and Civil Government: And I look upon it as a standing Evidence of a Providence that the strong Bands of wicked and refractory Men should stand in awe of a single Man, like themselves, only because he is invested with Authority. This, if it be duly consider'd, is very strange, and can be resolved into nothing but a Providence. Nor is it less strange that, considering the great Numbers of evil Men their Secrecy and Closeness, their Cunning and Falshood, their Envy and Necessity, their Activity and Selfishness, they should be able to do no more Hurt in the World than they do. Why do they not assassinate whom they please? Or what is the Reason that they do not forswear Men out of their Lives and Fortunes, and act whatsoever their Revenge, or Covetousness, or Lust shall prompt them to? And no account can be

be given of this, but the powerful Restraint of Providence.

Moreover, There are remarkable Examples in all Ages of evil Men, dogged by their own Guilt, and tortured by their own Consciences, whenas no Body else either accused or hurt them. And, on the other side, as frequent Instances of vertuous Men, who have been very comfortable under great Difficulties, and whose Spirits have been born up with an admirable Bravery under such Pressures as would ordinarily crush and sink other Men: And this, altho the Persons thus carrying themselves, were otherwise of no remarkable Strength or Courage. Neither of which Passages can be resolved into any other Causes, than the mighty Influence of Providence.

Nay, farther: It is very observable, how strangely sometimes Secret Sins are brought to light, especially such as *Murther* and *Treachery*, and where all Arts and Advantages were made use of for Concealment; such Persons becoming their own Accusers, when no Body else could do it for them; and not unusually their own Executioners too.

Above all these, there are some Instances of Vengeance befalling very flagitious Men, so signally, and with such pat and significant Circumstances, that (without any Uncharitableness) we may be led by the suffering, to the Sin; as in the famous Case of *Adonibezek*, *Judg. i. 7.* whose barbarous Usage of Threescore and Ten Kings, cutting off their Thumbs and Great Toes, and making them, like Dogs, gather their Meat under his Table, was re-paid upon himself, in the same Severity. Of kind to which

are

are those Panick Fears, and Shiverings, that often-times attend Blood-guilty Men, as long as they live : And tho' they may have escaped Revenge from the Hand of Men, yet this, as a *Cain's Mark* set upon them by the Hand of God, indelibly sticks by them, and follows them to their Graves.

It is needless to say any thing more on this Subject ; forasmuch as every Man that doth not wilfully shut his Eyes, may collect Instances to this purpose, both from the Government of the World in general, and from his own Fortunes in particular. For, besides the quiet Serenity and Comfortableness (in token of the Divine Favour) which usually attends a vertuous Course of Life ; and the Anxiety, Torment and Uneasiness, which as frequently (in testimony of the Divine Dislike) attends a wicked and flagitious one ; it is not a very unusual, nor (to be sure) an unpleasant Sight, to behold the former crowned with signal Success, and Worldly Prosperity ; and the latter punished with Shame and Beggary. And this sometimes shall happen in such Circumstances, when there is nothing to which this different Success can be imputed, but merely Divine Providence ; forasmuch as the latter shall otherwise be more cunning for the World, and every whit as industrious and frugal as the former : But Divine Providence only makes the Discrimination, whilst the one is under the Blessing of Heaven, and the other is apparently blasted and cursed.

And now what think you, *Biophilus*, upon the whole Matter ? Have I not acquitted my self in all the Three Things I propounded ? And now, laying all these Things together, is not here sufficient

cient Evidence to determine a prudent Man in the Case, and to satisfy him that there is a Providence in this World ; and consequently, that there will be a Judgment hereafter ?

Bioph. I cannot tell, *Sebastian*. I confess, you have said many very considerable Things ; and some of them beyond what I could have expected in the Case. But I have one main Objection, which especially touches the last Branch of your Argument ; and which, if it stick by you, all you have said will signify nothing ; but if you come clearly off from it, I shall not know what to think of the Business. It is this, in short : I do not see any such settled and constant Method in the Management of the Affairs of *this* World,

*A Vindication of
Divine Providence
in the Obscurity of
some of its Dispen-
sations in this Life.*

as must necessarily argue a Providence. For, in particular, notwithstanding all you have said, it cannot be denied, that very often the best of Men are oppressed, and born down by ill Fortune ; and contrariwise, evil Men are very happy and prosperous. Therefore it may seem that those Instances which you collect in favour of your Opinion, may happen by chance, rather than by the Dispensation of Providence : And then, if there be no Providence in this World, by your own Argument there can be no Judgment hereafter.

Sebast. If that be all, or the main of what you have to object, I am in hope to see some good Issue of this Conference : For, in the first place, you know, that which is impeached by this Objection, is but one single Instance, out of many which I have brought for the Assertion of a Providence ; and consequently, if this should fail,

fail, or if I should yield you all that the Objection pretends to ; yet so long as the other are unshaken by it, that great Doctrine may stand firm notwithstanding : For it is but as if you should pick one single Stone out of an huge Building, or (as I said before) find a Flaw in some one Thread of a great Cable ; neither of which can weaken or endanger the one, or the other. But then, besides, you cannot be ignorant that this which you now mention is an old, thread-bare Exception, worn out of all Fashion by the old Atheists and *Epicureans*, and which hath been canvass'd and baffled over and over by Men of all Ages, and of several Persuasions ; by *Job*, by *David*, by *Solomon* ; nay, by *Tully*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and several others ; that it is a great Argument of the Poverty of your Cause to be seen in it now-adays, and may justly excuse my Labour in confuting it. However, because you think fit to give it countenance, I will briefly say these Three Things in the Case ; viz.

First, That some measure of Intricacy or Obscurity in the Dispensation of *Divine Providence*, is no Argument against it, but for it.

Secondly, That there are very great Reasons assignable, why it may please the Divine Majesty to proceed sometimes indiscriminately, and keep no constant visible Method in the Distributions of Good and Evil in this present Life.

Thirdly, Yet, however this be sometimes obscure, there are at other times sufficient and legible Instances of a distinguishing Providence.

First, Some measure of Intricacy in the Dispositions of *Divine Providence*, is so far from being

being an Argument against it, that it is a great Argument for it. For, if we do not make God a meer necessary Agent, (which I hope I have satisfied you in) we must allow something to his Prerogative and Sovereignty; and consequently, grant that he may do some Things, because he will do so, and whereof he doth not make us acquainted with the Reasons: And we may very well allow to his Wisdom, to have a Reach beyond us, and to have other Measures to govern the World by, than we could have made for him. What! Shall we call God to Account of his Management? Shall he not govern the World at all, unless he order it just as we would have him? This is apparently so far from being reasonable, that it would be much more so to conclude on the contrary; namely, that if there were no Depths in the Divine Counsel which we could not fathom, no Meanders in the Way of Providence which we could not trace, it would be very suspicious whether there were any thing of Divinity in the whole Business. For if Things were constantly managed one Way, without any Variation, we should be apt to think all was under the rigid Laws of a fatal Necessity. If, on the other side, there were no Rule to be observed, no Foot-steps of any Method, then we should be tempted to think Chance ruled the World. But when we observe an Intermixture of these two, *viz.* that there is a Rule, though there be some Exceptions from it, then we have reason to conclude, that all is under a Powerful and a Free Agent, who, if he be also infinitely Wise, cannot but see Reason for several Things, which we cannot apprehend.

Secondly,

Secondly, There are very great and weighty Reasons assignable, why, in this particular Instance of Providence, (namely, in the Distribution of Good and Evil in this World) the Divine Majesty should not be obliged to gratifie our Curiosity with a plain Account of his Proceedings, but make some Exceptions to his General Rule: Amongst which, these following are considerable.

First, Because such a constant and visible Exercise of distributive Justice, as your Objection seems to require, would be such an irrefragable and palpable Evidence of a Providence, as would leave no room for the Discovery of Ingenuity, or a vertuous Disposition: It would deprive Men of the liberty of their Choice, whether they would be Atheistical, or Devout and Religious; and consequently, there would be no Excellency in Piety and Vertue. For (as I have said before, in a like Case) it would be no Argument of Love to God or Goodness, that a Man took care to serve and please God, if he constantly stood over us in a visible and undeniable Providence; so as that every Offender were taken in every Fact, and presently led to Execution; and, on the other side, if every vertuous Action were forthwith rewarded and crowned. In short, It is not agreeable to the Mind of God, to overrun the Freedom of our Choice, since he hath endowed us with it; nor to supercede that distinctive Faculty of our Nature: for should he do so, he would act contrary to himself, and to his own Glory, as well as to the Nature and Condition of Mankind.

Again, Secondly, A chequered and diversified Method of Divine Providence, wherein

there is an Intertexture of Prosperity and Adversity in the Fortunes of vertuous Men, tends more to their Improvement, than a more regular and constant Providence would do. For, as a continued Course of Prosperity is too apt to tempt Men to be wanton and careless; so a perpetual Series of Adversity would be as apt to sink and depress their Spirits: But a Middle-Way of Interchange in their Condition, balances them on both Sides, and maintains them in a more even Temper and Conversation. And for this Reason, it pleases the Divine Wisdom to make such false Steps, as you are apt to imagine them to be.

To which add, in the Third place, That herein lies the very Secret of Divine Wisdom; and by this very Way he doth most effectually assure us of the Point in question, (namely, a Judgment to come) in that there is such apparent necessity of it. For if the Divine Majesty should let the present World run at random, and interpose himself in no case to check the Hurry, and punish the Disorder, there would seem no reason to expect Justice from him hereafter, who gave no Token of it all this while: And then, on the other side, if he interposed so frequently and constantly, as to leave no Irregularity unpunish'd, nor any brave Action unrewarded, there would be no Business left, nor no need of a Day of Judgment. Whereas, by affording us some plain Instances of his Discrimination in this World, we are satisfied that he minds how Things go, and is able to judge; and yet, by permitting several other Things to run riot, and seemingly to be unanimator upon, he hath, as it were, cut out Work for a Day of Judgment.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Notwithstanding all this, as I said before, there are some sufficient and undeniable Instances of a distinguishing Providence in this World. I have granted to you, That sometimes the Ways of God are intricate and involved; and I have offered at some Reasons of it, to which many others might have been added; and, amongst the rest, that by this means we might be kept humble and modest, and taught to admire and reverence God, rather than to judge or pronounce of him. For these, I say, and other Reasons, best known to Infinite Wisdom, he thinks fit sometimes to lose us in the Meander of his Ways: Yet, I say, they are not always thus obscure; but sometimes he treads such plain and direct Paths, that we may easily follow him. And of this I have set before you several Examples already; and whosoever will diligently attend to it, may easily collect more: But I will not omit to put you in mind of one great standing one, and (as far as is possible) beyond all exception; and that was in the History of the Jewish Nation, who were infallibly sure to be happy, and most remarkably prosperous, so long as they stuck to the True God, and the Laws he had given them by *Moses*; and as sure to be signally miserable and calamitous, whensoever they apostatized from their God, or debauched their Religion. So that that People was placed as a Light upon a Mountain, and were an illustrious Instance to all the World, of that great Truth we are now discoursing of; and if there were no more Instances of this kind, that alone would be sufficient for the purpose.

Bioph. I must confess, if the Story be true, there was a very strange Fate attended that People.

Sebast. Fate ! do you call it ? What Colour or Pretence in the World is there for imputing those admirable Revolutions to Fate ? Could blind Fate make Distinction of Persons and Actions, and apply it self in the Distribution of Good or Evil, in proportion to Mens Deserts of Miscarriages ? Do not disparage your own Discretion so much, as to use the word *Fate* in such a Case: No ; assure your self, that was a signal Display of Divine Providence ; and such an one, as you cannot expect or demand a greater.

Bioph. But if it were the Effect of Providence, as you will needs have it, I wonder how it comes to pass that there is no such Thing now ; or why all the rest of Mankind was neglected by Divine Providence, and only that People, and in that Age and Corner of the World, so carefully managed by it.

Sebast. O *Biophilus* ! ask not God an Account of his Prerogative, nor, much less, prescribe to him how he should govern the World. What if he, pitying the dark state of the World then, did something extraordinary, to relieve and enlighten it ? And what if, having once given such abundant Proof of himself, he shall think that sufficient to all after-Ages ? Or, to say no more, What if it pleases him to make Faith, in some respects, more difficult now, than it was then ? Who shall expostulate the Matter with him, especially since he hath not left us destitute of sufficient Grounds to determine a prudent Man in the Case ? Which is all I have pretended to assert all this while,

while, and I think I have made it good at last, though with some Tediouſneſs of Diſcourſe, for which I beg your Pardon.

Phil. Dear *Sebastian*, do not ſlander our Judgments ſo much, as to ſuſpect we ſhould think any thing tedious, that is ſo much to the purpoſe. I thank you heartily for the Pains you have taken with us; for although (I thank God) I have long lived under a firm Perſuaſion, both of a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter; yet I am greatly rejoiced to find all ſure under me, and when my Reason encourages my Devotion: And eſpecially, I think my ſelf obliged to you, for the Satisfaction you have given my Neighbour. Is it not ſo, *Biophilus*?

Bioph. I tell you plainly, *Sebastian* hath ſtagger'd me; and I cannot tell what to ſay more for the preſent, but I will conſider further of it at leiſure.

Phil. Ay, but do it quickly, good *Biophilus*. You Sceptical Gentlemen are apt to take too long Time to conſider of theſe Matters. You know, die we muſt, and that ſhortly too; ſo that we have not any long Time to conſider in. What an horrible Surprize would it be, if whilst we ſtand doubting and diſputing, we ſhould hear the Sound of the laſt Trump, and be ſummoned to that great Tribunal? When Death once Arreſts us, there is no Bail will be taken; we muſt come to a ſtrict Account, and await an irreverſible Doom. So that there is no Dallying in this Matter.

If either of us had Intelligence that an Enemy were coming upon us, with deſign to aſſault us, and take away our Life, although it were a Perſon of but ordinary Reputation that brought us
the

the News, yet it would startle us, and we should not stand disputing the Truth of the Relation, but presently either prepare our selves to appease him, or arm our selves to encounter him; and then, if no Enemy appeared, we could securely expostulate the false Alarm afterwards. Or if there came a Report, that the Sea had broken its Banks, and over-flowed the Plain whereon our Houses stand; I assure my self, that neither of us would stand gravely deliberating, whether it were possible, or no; or cavilling about the Neglect of Repairing the Banks; or, least of all, lose so much Time as whilst we could send Messengers, and expect their return; but first get us up to the Mountains, and there at leisure inform our selves of the Truth of all Circumstances.

When *Noah*, for no less than One Hundred and Twenty Years together, preached Repentance, and foretold a Flood coming to drown all the World, no question but the generality of Men laughed at him, as a timorous, hypochondriacal Person: They could object, how unusual a Thing it was to be talk'd of; a Thing that no Man had seen, or had ever happened to the World before: They would discourse Philosophically in the Case too, and represent it as a very absurd Thing to imagine, that the Water should rise above the Earth, and over-flow the Tops of their stately Houses; for (might they say) Where shall there be Water enough to do it? From whence should it come? Or how should this Fellow have Notice of it, before all other Men? And perhaps they would conclude, that, at worst, they should have Time to shift for themselves, when they see it come in earnest, and

and escape as well as others. Hereupon, they ate, and drank, and feasted, and made merry; and laugh'd at that precise Coxcomb, with his new Machine of an Ark: But *So* (saith our Saviour) *shall the Coming of the Son of Man be.*

Alas, *Biophilus!* Whilst we dream, the Judgment slumbers not; whilst we doubt and dispute, God is in earnest: And the Time draws on apace, when Christ Jesus, the Judge of the World, shall come *in the Glory of his Father, and of all the holy Angels.* The Heavens shall then melt away, and the Earth be on fire, from one End of it to another: The Dead shall rise out of their Graves, and make an huge Assembly: The Books of all Mens Actions shall be opened, and the Devil, together with every Man's own Conscience, shall be the Accusers. Then shall all those that are conscious to themselves to have lived virtuously and holily, look up with Joy and Comfort, to see their Saviour become their Judge; to find a Vindication from all those unjust Censures that have passed upon them here below; to come to an End of their Labours, a Reward of their Services, the Accomplishment of their Faith and Hopes. Lord! What Joy will be in their Countenances! What Glory upon their Heads! How the Angels smile upon them, and welcome them to their Journeys End, and Heaven opens in an admirable Scene of Light and Glory to receive them!

But, on the other side, all that are privy to themselves to have lived wickedly, basely, and unprofitably, shall look pale, and tremble, and call upon the Rocks and Mountains to hide them from the Face of the Lamb that sits upon the Throne; for they shall see all black and dismal about them;

no

no Tears will move Pity, no Rhetorick will persuade, no Excuses will be admitted, no Appeal allowed, no Refuge to be found, nor Reprieve to be hoped for ; but they shall hear that dreadful Sentence, *Depart Accursed into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels* ; and shall see Hell open her Mouth to receive them into unquenchable Flames.

Bioph. I protest, you speak with such Feeling, *Philander*, that your Discourse hath more Power upon me, than all the Arguments that ever I heard in my life : And I know not what is the matter, but my Heart trembles ; therefore let me once more intreat you to adjourn the remainder of this Discourse till another time, and in the mean while I'll consider of it, as I promised you.

Phil. Ah, dear Neighbour ! Do not prove like that unhappy *Felix* in the Scripture : Do not go about to elude what you cannot evade : No, put not off this Business a Moment longer. Now that it seems God hath touched your Heart, quench not his Holy Spirit ; it may be, you will never be in such a Temper again, if you lose this Opportunity.

Bioph. I assure you, I like this Temper (as you call it) so well, that I do not desire to sell more of it. But if you are resolved to go on, to torment me, I pray do me the favour first to answer me this Question. If these Things be so as you represent them, how comes it to pass, that Men unconcern'd about Religion, die as comfortably, many times, as any others ? The Reason of my Question is this ; because you will pretend, that whilst Men are well in Health, and swimming with the Tide of Prosperity, they

they may either artificially put off the Thoughts of these Things, though they be true ; or the Noise of Business, and the Caresses of their Senses, may obscure all Apprehension of another World. But sure, when Men find themselves dying, and that there is but one Way with them, it should be too late for them to flatter themselves, or to admit of the Flatteries of others ; then surely Prejudices cease, and Men are at leisure to think : The Glory of the World cannot dazzle their Eyes, when it is leaving them, and they it. What then, I say, can be the Reason, if these Things be true, (which you speak so affectionately of) that there is not as remarkable a Difference in Mens Temper of Spirit when they come to die, as there seems to be in their Conversation whilst they are alive ?

How it comes to pass, that there is no greater Difference in the last Act of Mens Lives.

Scbast. I apprehend your Question very well, and the Reasons of your asking it too. And for Answer to it, I pray tell what is the Reason that Men that love their Health and their Estates both very well, will nevertheless be Drunkards, and Whore-masters, and Gamesters ; though they see by daily Experience, that these are very sure Methods to out them of both ? You will tell me, I suppose, that they feed themselves with absurd and unreasonable Hopes, which fool their Discretion ; or that they are bewitched and besotted with those kind of Pleasures, and so consider nothing at all. Why, just so it is here : The Things we speak of are undoubtedly true, and the Miscarriage in them is fatal ; but Men are careless and incogitant, and slip into the Pit of Destruction before they are aware :

They

They live merrily, because they never think of any Thing, and they die as sottishly as they lived.

Again, There is another sort of Men that are captious and conceited, who will chop Logick, as we say, with God Almighty ; they will have not only their Reason satisfied, but their Curiosity also, or they will not believe ; they must see a Spirit, and Heaven, and Hell, or one must come from the Dead to tell them News out of the other World, or they will not be contented. Now, God will not indulge this Humour of theirs, and they are resolv'd to venture him ; that is, they will be damned, rather than forego it.

Besides, There are others take a great deal of Pains to dis-believe : They will use all the Arts of Sophistry, all the Tricks and Evasions of Wit, intrench and fortifie themselves in their Atheistical Conceits: In a word, they will cheat their own Reason, outface their own Conscience, and bring upon themselves a stupid Insensibility of all that is good and vertuous ; and so, in conclusion, they die quietly, and go silently into the Bottomless Pit.

To all this you must consider, that it is very probable that many of these Men may be very far from dying cheerfully, tho' we are not able to observe their Agones and Torments ; for it may very well be, that when once they begin to consider what a desperate Condition they are in ; the very Thoughts of that, together with their bodily Disease in conjunction, presently overwhelms their Spirits, and makes their Passage out of the World more compendious, but never the more comfortable.

But

But after all, you shall find some of theafore-said Persons, when they come to die, sadly bewail their Folly and Carelesness of this kind : But where ever did you hear of an holy and virtuous Man, that ever repented of his Choice or Pains in Religion, or Care of his Soul, and Sollicitude in Preparation for this Occasion ? 'Tis possible, indeed, such a Man may express no Transports, because his Body is like other Mens, and the strength of his Disease may infeeble his Spirits, and cloud his Reason, and so interrupt the Exercise of his Faith and Hope: And, on the other side, the prophane and irreligious Man, tho' perhaps (as you suppose) he cannot, or will not dissemble at the Approach of Death, yet he may be sottish and insensible ; and then whatsoever Difference of State they are entring upon, there may be no discernible Difference in their Departure hence. And so, you see, your Question will not serve to the Purpose you propounded it for.

Phil. Come, *Biophilus*, leave these Sceptical Artifices, these captious Questions ; Do not seek out ways to muzzle your own Conscience, or impose upon your Reason : A Judgment there will be, and it is all the Wisdom in the World to be prepared for it. It is in your Power, by the *Grace of God*, to order Matters so, that we shall rather hope and wish for it, than fear it ? And what vast Odds is there between them too ? You are sensible that it is only a Judgment following Death, that makes Death terrible ; at least, to our Minds and Understanding. Indeed, it is possible our Bodies may be disturbed at the

Assaults

*The wonderful
Comfort and Advan-
tages of being
severed against a
Day of Judgment.*

Assaults of it ; but meer Death can never shake our Minds, or discompose one Thought, if we are satisfied that all will be well after it. And what an happy and desirable Condition were it, to be out of the Reach of that King of Terrors, to see Light through that dark Vault of the Grave, to out-live all a Man's Fears, and to live to his Hopes ? What a strange Alteration will that one Thing make in a Man's Projections and Designs, in his Countenance, and in his Spirit, and in the whole Management of himself ! For, Who can be afraid of any other Accident, that hath no cause to fear Death ? Who will be concerned about Riches, or be much discomposed whether his Temporal Affairs succeed well or ill, that is provided for Eternity ? Who will stoop so low, as to lay any stress upon Fame and Reputation, that hath approved himself to God and his own Conscience, and can stand the Shock of the great Tryal at the Day of Judgment ? He that is in a Condition not to fear Death, will have no reason to fear Men, or Devils, or Spirits, or Solitude, or Darknes ; but may be as bold as a Lion ; and cannot probably be tempted, either to express a mean Passion, or to do a base Action : To be sure, he will crouch to no body, flatter and humour no body ; for no body can hurt him : And so his Life is easie, as well as comfortable, forasmuch as he has no body to please but God and his own Conscience.

But, as I was saying, this is to be prepared for. Salvation is not a Matter of Course, nor the Judgment a meer piece of State and Formality ; but infinitely sacred and solemn. The Judge is Wise, and Holy, and Just ; the Tryal strict and

severe.

severe, the Doom irreversible, the Misery intolerable, if a Man miscarry ; as well as the Felicity unspeakable, if he stand right at that Tribunal: And to all this, the critical Time draws on a-pace ; we feel our selves daily dying, therefore it concerns us to do what is to be done out of hand.

Bioph. I am convinced, that it is the wisest Course, to provide for the Business you speak of, if it could be done without too much Trouble.

Phil. Ah, *Biophilus* ! Can any Care be too great in such a Concern ? Can any thing seem troublesome, that may at once secure us from all other Troubles ? But the Trouble is not great neither ; it is but being sincerely and heartily Religious, and all is done.

Bioph. That is soon said, I confess ; but not so soon done. Besides, I am never the wiser for such a general Advice ; for there are so many Religions in the World, that it is hard to know which to trust to. Some sublime Religion to such an heighth of spirituality, (as they call it) that a Man cannot tell what to make of it: And again, Some make no more of it, than honest Morality. Some dress it up so fine and gawdily, with so many Trappings and Ornaments, that it is hard to find what the naked Truth of the Thing is : And others render it so plain and

The different Representations of Religion, a great Temptation to Septicism.

coarse, that a Man is tempted to despise it. Some represent it so thin and subtile, that a Man's Reason can take no hold of it: And others propound it so grossly and absurdly, that a Man had need have a good Stomach to it, or he could not digest it. Some make it a very easie Thing,

a Trick of Wit, a meer Notion, but the becoming of a Party, or a bare Believing; nay, a peculiar Garb, an Hair-Shirt, or a Friar's Girdle, doth the business: With others it is a Matter of infinite Difficulty; and hath so many nice and strict Observations belonging to it, that they are able to discourage any Pretence to it. In a word, it seems to me to be what the Painter pleases, forasmuch as I see some describe it out of the Pleasantry of their own Sanguine Fancy, and others out of the black Humour of their Hypochondriack Passions. So that, upon the whole Matter, I think I had as good maintain my own Character, and with-hold my Assent, till Men are better agreed amongst themselves upon the Point.

Sebast. God forbid, *Biophilus*; for that you cannot do, unless you will adventure to be damned; as certainly you must, if you be found to be of no Religion.

Bioph. Why, have you less Charity for Men of my Temper, than for all the World besides? Must a Sceptilt be certainly damned, if there be a Judgment?

Sebast. Far be it from me to be uncharitable towards any Men, if I could help them. But I must tell you, I have less Hope for that Man that hath no Faith at all, than for him that hath a bad one: And it must be a very bad Religion indeed, that is not better than none. For though by reason of the Variety of Persuasions, (which you take notice of) a Man may be fatally misled, as to perish in a blind Devotion; yet certainly, he that is so fantastically wise, as to be of no Religion at all, cannot be saved. But what need is there of either of these? There are

are a great many false Religions it is acknowledged ; but there is a Truth too, and that not so hard to discern as you represent it, if a Man sincerely apply himself to the search of it.

Bioph. Now you have nick'd the Business, you think ; as if every Country had not the true Religion, or every Man's own Persuasion were not the Truth ; at least, if they be allowed to be their own Judges.

Sebast. Good *Biophilus* do not jest in these Matters. I know you are a witty Man ; but do not turn the edge of it against your own Soul. Come, I'll tell you a Religion that all the World shall agree in ; and, my Soul for yours, you shall be safe, if you will comply with it. Do not stare : It is no more but this ;

Live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World. Or, if

A sure Religion.

you will have it in other words ; Resolve with your self, not to do that Thing (whatever come of it) that you cannot answer to God, and your own Conscience ; and do every Thing within your power, that may approve and recommend you to both ; and thenceforward fear not a Day of Judgment.

Bioph. Now you speak to the purpose, indeed ; that I must needs say, is good Counsel, and such as I think all the World is agreed in ; therefore I thank you for it, and I will try to follow it.

Phil. God prosper your Resolution, *Biophilus*. And now, *Sebastian*, that we are happily come to this Point, I pray give me leave to put *Biophilus's* Question a little more home to you. I thank God, I am sensible of the Great Day approaching, and make some Conscience of being

provided for it ; but because I would not, for all the World, be mistaken in my Measure, in a Business of that Moment, I crave the Assistance of your Judgment, how far that care extends; and particularly, what it comprises. The Reason of my Solicitude herein (besides the Consequence of the Thing it self) is, because I have

Scrupulous and fantastical Rules of Preparation for the Day of Judgment, reproved.

heard it delivered as a standing Rule by some Men, That the only sure Preparation is, That a Man live every Day as if it were the last he had to live. Which Doctrine hath often raised Scruples in my Mind, and I suspect it may have had the like effect upon others; and to tell you my Thoughts plainly, I look upon it as unpracticable, and inconsistent with the common Affairs of Life: For, most certainly, on that Day which I thought would be the last I should live, I would not fail to dismiss all other Business whatsoever; I would scarce eat, or drink, or sleep, but wholly apply my self to Acts of Devotion. Now, if that Rule be true, Religion is a more anxious Thing than I was aware of: And if it be not true, I pray make me understand what is the Truth in this Matter.

Schast. I do not know why you should lay much stress upon my Judgment in such a Case: But if you will have my Opinion, it is plainly this, That the Rule you speak of is far more devout, than judicious; for, as you well observe, since God Almighty hath cloathed our Souls with Bodies, and placed us in a World of Business, it cannot be that he should expect we should, in the whole Course of our Lives, so singly and solely apply our selves to the Affairs of

another World, as we should think fit to do, just when we are going off the Stage, and Solemnly preparing our selves for an immediate Appearance at God's Judgment-seat. If therefore those Men (you speak of) had prescribed, that we should every Day think of the Day of Judgment, as not knowing how soon it may be upon us; or that we should take care every Day to advance in our Provision for it, they had delivered a great and a necessary Truth: But when they speak as if they meant, that we must do nothing any Day, but what we would do, if we were sure it were our last Day, they thwart the very Order of Divine Providence in the Condition of Men, and the Constitution of the World; they condemn the Practice, and call in question the State of the best of Men; they lay a snare for the Conscience of the Weak and Timorous; and, in a word, they obtrude an impracticable Notion, for the most concerning and necessary Truth.

But you are not to wonder, or be troubled at it. For, though there is generally more Defect of Devotion, than of knowledge in the World, yet there are some particular Men, wherein the former exceeds the latter; and such Men please themselves in a pretty Saying, without being able to judge of the Prudence of it; and whilst they go about to awaken some secure and careless Persons to a serious Sense of their Eternal Concern, are not aware that they afford Matter of Everlasting Scruple and Offence to those that are truly and tenderly conscientious.

It were easie to give you sundry Instances of this super-fine, high strained Divinity; but there is one I will mention, for its Affinity with that

before us; viz. You shall find it dogmatically delivered by some seeming great Casuists, That in certain and indisputable Things, it is a Man's Duty to do that which is best of the kind; and in uncertain and controverted Cases, to take the surer side. Now if these Things were laid down as prudential Advices only to direct a Man which Way to encline himself, they were very useful; but to make them express Measures of Duty, is, to make more Laws than God hath made, and condemn more Things for Sin, than he condemns; and consequently, cannot chuse but imbroil the Consciences of Men. For, suppose Prayer be better than Secular Business, then, upon this Principle, I must turn *Euchire*, and spend all my Time in Devotion. Suppose there be fewer Temptations in a Monastick Life, than in common Conversation, then every one that is careful of his Soul, must retire into a Cloister. If there be Difficulties attending Magistracy and Publick Employment, then I must fold up my Hands, and do nothing but go into my Cell, and pray God to amend the World, though I be called to the other. If Bodily Exercises and Games have some Snares in them, I must allow my self no Recreations. Nay, I shall be put endlessly and anxiously to dispute, whether it be better to give a poor Man Twopence, or a Shilling, or Five Shillings, &c. whether I shall pray three Times a Day, or seven times a Day; whether an Hour, or two Hours. And indeed, every thing I go about, will afford inextricable Difficulties upon these Principles.

But that by the Way only: As for the Business in hand, trouble your self no further than to live every Day well, and be sure to do nothing
you

you cannot answer ; be always getting ground, and growing better and better ; as near as you can, do every Day something that may turn to account another Day ; and then comfortably await God's Time.

Phil. I thank you heartily, both for your direct Answer, and your Digression : And I pray pardon me, if I come a little closer to you yet. I know you live under a comfortable Prospect of the Day of Judgment ; and I am confident you neither would nor could enjoy that even Tranquillity, if you were not upon sure Grounds. Now my Request is, that you will be so free with me, as to make me acquainted with your whole Management of your self : For, though I have a Rule to walk by, yet, for fear I should mis-apply it, and either through Superstition and Scrupulosity over-go it, or by the Carelessness of my own Heart fall short of it, I should be very glad to have an Example to interpret it to me.

Sebast. I clearly perceive you either love me too much, or know me not so well as I thought you did, in that you think of making me your Example. Alas ! *Phil.* little do you think how many Follies and Infirmities I labour under ; and as little, what Qualms and Dejections of Spirit I sometimes feel within my self.

Phil. I confess I do not know you so well, but that I desire to know more of you : And though it be a great Thing I ask of you, that you should absolutely unbosom your self to me ; yet you that have done me so much good already, I hope will not deny me this Advantage of your Conversation.

Sebast. Ah ! dear *Phil.* you may command me any Thing ; But I tell you, my Life hath too

many Blots in it, for you to make a Copy of. In truth, such a Precedent will endanger to make you too remifs.

Phil. Now you discourage me more than ever, and make me fufpect that it is an harder Thing to be faved, than I imagined, fince you find fuch Difficulty in it.

Sebast. Good *Phil.* excuse me from faying any thing of my felf; but (if it were not too tedious for this Time) I would

Eulabes's Hiftory of his own Life, and Preparations for Judgment.

give you the Hiftory of an holy Friend of mine, which I had from his own Mouth, and that, I affure my felf, will be of more ufe to you, than what you feem fo paffionately to defire.

Phil. Of whom do you mean?

Sebast. Of my dear Friend *Eulabes*, now with God; a Perfon of as great Sanctity of Life, and Comfortablenefs of Spirit, as Earth can eafily admit of.

Phil. I have heard much of the Fame of his Piety, but I never had the happinefs to know him. For God's fake, let us have his Story, fince you will not gratifie me in my firft Request.

Sebast. I remember the Time well when I made much the fame Request to him, which you have now done to me: And he, after he had for a good while modestly declined giving me Satisfaction therein, (by fuch Excufes as it is not neceffary I fhould now repeat, and I had replied to them as well as I could,) at length yielding to my Importunity, he began thus:

“ Dear Friend (*quoth he*) though from the firft Date of our Acquaintance, our Converfation hath been fo intimate, and my Breafth hath been

"been so open to you, that I scarcely know any
"Thing by my self, that you have not been privy
"to; yet because you are pleased to entertain
"the Curiosity to enquire farther after me,
"I will not stick to tell you as well what hap-
"pened to me before the commencement of our
"Friendship, as also such things as (in regard
"they passed only betwixt God and my own
"Soul) may be unknown to you, though they
"were transacted since.

"Know then (*said he*) that about such time
"as I had out-grown the meer Follies and Infir-
"mities of my Youth, and began, together with
"the advance of my bodily Strength and Vigour,
"to make also some essays of Understanding and
"Discretion, I quickly found, that by the Spring-
"Tide of my Blood, and the great encrease of
"Bodily Spirits, several very impetuous Passions
"and Inclinations boiled up in me, notwith-
"standing those small Efforts which my Reason
"(as yet) could make to the contrary.

"This I then thought (and do still) to be a
"case common to other Men with my self; and
"since I have considered of it, I am apt to think
"that our Wise Creator so ordered the Matter,
"that these two Combatants, Sense and Reason,
"should grow up, and enter the Lists together;
"to the intent, that as Reason should not be
"without its Antagonist, to hold it in play; so
"on the other side, those Bodily Powers should
"not be left without a Guide, to conduct, con-
"troll and manage them.

"However, hereupon Bodily Inclinations
"growing daily stronger and stronger, and my
"Reason and Conscience not being yet foil'd or
"corrupted, there arose a very strong Conflict
in,

“ in me between them, and that as yet of very
“ doubtful Issue ; forasmuch as both being
“ Parts of my self, I could not easily resolve
“ which Side to encline to.

“ In the mean time, (as God would have it)
“ calling to mind the Solemnity of my Baptism,
“ I remember’d that then, when I was dedicated
“ to Christ, and entred as a Candidate of Eter-
“ nal Life, I had renounced the Flesh, with the
“ Affections and Lusts. Hereupon therefore I
“ resolved to withstand them, if I could, and
“ to this end, begged the Assistance of God’s
“ Grace ; and (by the Advice of my Parents,
“ and those good Persons, who, having been
“ Sureties for me, had a Desire to discharge
“ their Consciences of that Trust which lay upon
“ them) I applied my self to the Bishop for Con-
“ firmation: whereby having obtained not only
“ the Blessing of my Spiritual Father, but made
“ Christian Religion now my own Act and
“ Choice ; and besides, had put such a Publick
“ Obligation upon my self, as would render it
“ very shameful for me to go back, or retreat ;
“ I, from that time forward, was under a more
“ awful Sense of God and Religion, and felt
“ frequent Motions of the Holy Spirit within me.

Here I remember, I a little interrupted him,
applauding his singular Felicity, in being so ear-
ly engaged in the Way of Heaven ; by which
means, that Course was now grown habitual to
him, and his Accounts much easier at the Day
of Judgment.

But he proceeded, saying, “ It is true, indeed,
“ it was God’s great Goodness, to awaken me to
“ a Sense of my Duty thus early, as I have told
“ you : But then, what by the Allurements of
“ Plea-

"Pleasures, which have always too poignant a
"Relish with younger Years ; what by Engage-
"ment in Business: which grew upon me after-
"wards; and what through the Contagion of
"Example, which surrounds a Man with too
"common Instances of Carelessness in these
"weighty Matters ; I was drawn off from any
"close Attendance upon Religion, until it plea-
"sed God, in his wise Methods of Grace, to lay
"his Hand upon me, in a dangerous Fit of Sick-
"ness: And this, partly, as it stained all the
"Beauty of the World, which heretofore al-
"lured me ; partly also, as it mortified and en-
"feebled those bodily Powers which before were
"too potent in me ; but Principally, as it gave
"me Leisure and Inclination to recollect my
"self ; I thereupon (seeing nothing but Death
"before me) fell into a great Concern for ano-
"ther Life, and so by degrees came to a solemn
"Resolution of making Religion my chief Busi-
"ness, and took all the Care possible, that so I
"might be prepared for the Great Day of Trial.

"Now, because this is the Point which (I
"perceive) you enquire after, I will acquaint
"you with the Method I pursued ; and, to deal
"faithfully with you, (as I hope I did with my
"own Soul) the Strefs of my preparations lay
"in these Three things.

"First, Because I was sure that an holy Life
"must needs be the best Passport for the other
"World, therefore I considered how I might
"keep my self closest to my Duty, and walk in
"all the Commandments of God as blameless as
"it was possible.

"Secondly, Because I knew that I had failed
"heretofore, and I feared I should again, in se-
"veral

“veral things, fall short of my Duty; therefore
“I bethought my self how I might do something
“extraordinary, if not to make up those De-
“fects, yet to shew, at least, the Sincerity of
“my Love to God and Religion, and the Value
“I had for the World to come.

“Thirdly, and principally, in Consideration
“of the Purity and Justice of God, and the
“Strictness of his Laws, I desired and endea-
“voured to interest my Self in the Satisfaction
“and Intercession of my Saviour.

“For the First of these, namely, the Appro-
“ving my self to God in the Integrity of an ho-
“ly Life, I considered, that Eternal Life not be-
“ing a thing of course, or naturally due to Men,
“but the singular Gift of God, our Hopes of it,
“and Title to it, must depend upon the Perfor-
“mance of such Conditions as he should think
“fit to impose; and forasmuch as no man can
“know God’s Mind, and what he will be plea-
“sed with, unless he himself reveal it. There-
“fore, in the first place, I did not content my
“self with Humane writings, and Moral Dis-
“courses, nor much less to conform my self to
“the Measures and Customs of the World; but
“set my self daily and diligently to study the
“holy Scriptures, and took the Measures of my
“Duty, and the Rule of my Life thence. And
“to this I joined daily and earnest Prayer, that
“it would please Divine Goodness, not only to
“make me understand his Will, but guide and
“enable me to perform it; that he would pre-
“serve me from prejudices, from Inadvertency,
“from foolish Opinions, and rash Actions. And
“this I performed not customarily and formal-
“ly, as if I complemented God Almighty; but
“with

"with my utmost vigour, and Intention of Spirit; and never thought I had acquitted myself therein, till I found my Heart warmed with its own Motion.

"More particularly, because I found that hard Study, and Sickliness of Body, had made me somewhat Subject to the Disorders of the Irascible, (as heretofore Health and Plenty had enclined me to the Concupiscible;) therefore I vehemently implored the Divine Grace for my Relief; and have been frequently constrained to allay a Storm or Passion with a Shower of Tears.

"Besides this I took special Care to keep out of vicious and licentious Company, which I was confident, if it did not taint me with some ill Example, would be sure to cool my Heat, and abate my Edge to Religion: And contrariwise, I contrived as much as possibly I could to keep such Conversation as was likely to provoke and inflame me in the Course I had propounded to my self.

"And lest all this should not be sufficient to secure me of my Intentions, Every Evening I erected a petty Tribunal within my self, and called my self to Account for the Day past, if I had slipped any Opportunity of doing or receiving Good; if any rash Word or Action had escaped me; if any earthly or sensual Affection had been stirring in me; if I had been guilty of any Instances of Injustice, that hereafter might rise up in Judgment against me, I repented, and made my Peace with God and Man, as far as it was possible, before I slept. I examined my self also what Progress I had made that Day towards Heaven; whether,

"now,

“ now I had spent a Day of my Life, I was a
“ Day’s Journey onward of my Way ; and what
“ I had to shew for the Expence of that Day. I
“ always took, as I said, the Evening for this
“ Business, both in regard of the Privacy and
“ Quiet of that Season, and also because I found
“ that then the Solitude and Darknes of the
“ Nights were easie, and the Sleep comfortable,
“ when I had first cleared all Scores : And be-
“ sides, I was cautious lest the Interposition of
“ Sleep should have made me forget the Passages
“ of the former Day, if I had deferred the Ac-
“ count of them till the next.

“ Besides all this, I found it necessary (and
“ accordingly practised) to set one Day aside in
“ every Month, and more Solemnly and wholly
“ dedicated it to this Business, to romage my
“ own Heart, to compare my self with my self,
“ and to observe how much I advanced in my
“ great Design.

2. “ The Second Part of my Care (as I told
“ you) was, to efface those Errors of my Life,
“ which had either wittingly or unwillingly
“ escaped me. Now to this purpose, I was very
“ desirous to do some exemplary good Things,
“ that I might lift up the Head, and raise the
“ Spirit of Piety in the World ; and the rather,
“ to the Intent, that if I had done any hurt by
“ ill Example formerly, I might, when I could,
“ not revoke the Act, yet prevent the Contagion
“ of it. And besides, I was watchful of, and
“ gladly embraced all Opportunities of demon-
“ strating the Sincerity of my Love to God,
“ though it was by a costly or difficult Service ;
“ for I made no doubt, but the more there was
“ of self-denial in a vertuous Action, the greater
“ was

"was the Evidence of Grace and Divine Love
 "in performing it. Upon this account, I could
 "well have been content it would have pleased
 "God to have given me a just occasion of some
 "smart, but tolerable Sufferings for him. And
 "with this Prospect, I have put my self upon
 "some measures of Charity, that were to the
 "very utmost of my Ability, if not beyond it :
 "I have Interposed my self voluntarily for the
 "Rescue of some desolate and oppressed Person
 "from a potent Adversary, and thereby deri-
 "ved the Trouble upon my self, which I prote-
 "cted that Person from. I have put my self for-
 "ward, to reclaim some peevish, deluded Sectary,
 "or some vicious Person ; from whom I have
 "had very ingrateful Treatment for my Good-
 "Will : That by all, or some of these, I might
 "shew that I loved God as well as my Self. Not
 "that I had any proud Conceit or Opinion of
 "Supererrogation in any Thing I could do or
 "suffer : So far from it, That I am sensible, that
 "when I have done all I can, I must acknow-
 "ledge my self an unprofitable Servant, and
 "that I have not done so much as was my Duty
 "to do. Notwithstanding, as a Subject that
 "hath been in Rebellion, against his Prince, or
 "some Way or other disoblged him, will be
 "glad to be employed in the most difficult Ser-
 "vices, that he may shew his Loyalty, and re-
 "cover his Favour : So I, who was sensible that
 "in many Things I had offended the Divine
 "Majesty, could not chuse but prize an Occa-
 "sion of doing something more than Matter of
 "strict Duty, that I might shew, that neverthe-
 "less I loved him. And indeed, it seems to
 "me, that those who pretend so much Modesty
 "and

“ and Humility, as to be scrupulous of over-
 “ doing in this manner, are only, in reality,
 “ afraid of loving him too much; which, I am
 “ sure, is impossible. And therefore I find, that
 “ such Free-will Offerings give a Man’s Heart
 “ great Assurance, and enable a Man to look
 “ with the more comfortable Erection of Mind
 “ towards God, and the Day of Judgment. So I
 “ observed *Nehemiah, chap. xiii. ver. 14.* when
 “ he had shewed himself publick-spirited, and
 “ generously, and with considerable Difficulty
 “ and Hazard to himself, had asserted the In-
 “ trest of the oppressed *Jews*, and their Reli-
 “ gion, he then, with an holy Confidence, ad-
 “ dresses himself to God, in these words; *Re-*
 “ *member me, O Lord for this; and wipe not out*
 “ *the good Deeds which I have done, &c.* This, I
 “ take it, is *Laying up in store a good Foundation*
 “ *against the Time to come: This is Making Friends*
 “ *of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when we*
 “ *fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habita-*
 “ *tions.* Such Actions, I say, either of Piety or
 “ Charity aforesaid, are, as it were, the Draw-
 “ ing a Bill upon God Almighty, to be paid in
 “ the other World; and making a wise and fru-
 “ gal Purchase of a Reversion in Heaven.

“ Wherefore (as I told you) I studied all Op-
 “ portunities, and consulted the utmost of my
 “ Ability, to do some remarkable good Things,
 “ that might be beneficial to the World, or to
 “ Religion, when I was dead and gone; and
 “ endeavoured to sow such Seed, as whose Fruit
 “ should, by the Grace of God, be fresh and last-
 “ ing to the very Day of Judgment.

3. “ But when all was done, I laid the great-
 “ est Stress of all upon the Third and last Part of

“ my

“my Preparation; and that was, in interesting
“my self in the Satisfaction and Intercession of
“my Saviour. For, besides the many and great
“Failings I was sensible of, I consider’d also, the
“Purity of the *Divine Nature* was such, that he
“found Folly in his Angels, and detested Sin where-
“ever he found it; that his Law was strict and
“perfect; that it was impossible any Thing
“should be acceptable to such a Majesty, or
“make amends for the Breach of such a Law,
“but that which was perfect too; that nothing
“could make Atonement for Sin, but a Lamb
“without Spot; that nothing could successfully
“intercede for us, but the Only Son of God.
“Therefore I set an *infinite Value* upon the Dis-
“covery of the *Light and Grace of the Gospel*, I
“with all Heartiness and Thankfulness embrac-
“ed the Terms of the *New Covenant*, I endea-
“voured to affect my self with the highest Sense
“of Love and Gratitude towards my *Lord Jesus*
“*Christ*, I pleaded his Sacrifice in my Prayers,
“I fed my Faith with his Blood, I raised my
“Hopes by having so powerful an *Advocate* with
“the *Father*, I comforted my self against the
“Accusations of the Devil and my own Con-
“science, and all my black and melancholy
“Thoughts, by the Consideration, that he was
“appointed *Judge of the World* that was in Hu-
“mane Nature, who had been sensible of our
“Infirmities, had Experience of our Tempta-
“tions, and had so much Good Will to us as to
“die for us. I acknowledged and adored his
“Divinity, I confessed him before Men, I glo-
“ried in his Cross and Sufferings, I frequently
“observed the Memorial of his Death and Pas-
“sion in the Sacrament, I joined my self to his
“Church,

Q

“ Church, I honoured his Ministers, I reveren-
 “ ced all his Institutions; and, in a Word, as
 “ the highest and truest Honour I could do to
 “ him, I endeavoured to be like him, by Imita-
 “ tion of his Sincerity, Purity, Meekness, and
 “ Goodness; in Confidence that upon these
 “ Terms he would own me when he comes again
 “ in his glorious Majesty.

“ This (*said he*) hath been the Course and
 “ Care of my Life, from such time as I became,
 “ in earnest, sensible of the Concern of another
 “ World, and this is the Summ of my constant
 “ Preparations for the Day of Judgment; and
 “ in this Posture I endeavour always to be found
 “ whensoever Gods calls me. I confess, I should
 “ be right glad (if it pleased God to give me
 “ Opportunity) to make some more special and
 “ particular Preparations against the *Approaches*
 “ of Death, if I could be aware of it; and to trim
 “ and snuff my Lamp against the Bridegroom
 “ comes: But for that, God’s Will be done;
 “ However, by his Grace, I hope I shall not be
 “ utterly surprized nor dismayed; having made
 “ this habitual Provision for it. Thus far he.

Phil. Your Friend *Eulabes* appears to have been

*Eulabes his more
 special Preparati-
 ons for Death to-
 wards the Approa-
 ches of it.*

a most exemplary, holy, and a
 wise Man; and the Relation
 which you have given us, as
 from his own Mouth, exceed-
 ingly fits the Character of such
 a Person; for there is both a live-

ly Spirit of Piety breathing in it, and withal,
 such a becoming and proportionable Modesty, as
 sufficiently *assures* the real Truth of the whole
Narrative, forasmuch as I cannot suspect you
 would impose upon us herein; nor can I believe

it easie (if possible) for an evil Man to draw a Scene of Vertue, with so many Arguments of Probability. For my own part, I have been all along so affected with it, that nothing hath grieved me so much, as that you seem'd to draw towards an End of your Story, as well as the good Man to the End of his Life. And now I have a Thousand Questions, which I would gladly put to you farther about him, but that I am afraid of being too troublesome to you; especially, since it grows late. However, I pray, pardon me, whilst I interrogate you a little about the last Act of so brave a Person. I remember, you said, he intended, if God gave him Opportunity, to make some more particular and special Preparations at the *Approaches* of Death: Now I have a great Curiosity to enquire, whether it pleas'd God to afford him such *Opportunities* as he wish'd, and what Use he made of them? Gratify me in this, and I will detain you no longer at this Time.

Sebast. Why, therein, dear *Phil.* I will satisfy you as well as I am able. you must know therefore, that *Eulabes* having, through the Course of his whole Life maintain'd a strict Temperance, and now well advanc'd in Years, it happen'd to him, (as it is usual in such Cases) by the good Providence of God, to have a gradual and leisurely Dissolution; he was neither racked to Death by the intolerable Pains of the Gout or Stone, nor hurried out of the World in the Fiery Chariot of a violent Fever, nor stabbed by an Apoplexy, nor stupified by a Lethargy; but was mildly and gently summon'd by a lingering Sickness, so that insensibly he felt himself dying. By this Means he had both Time, Strength and Understanding

derstanding to settle every Thing according to his Wishes. When therefore he saw the Harbingers of Death draw on towards him, and that he could not long maintain the little Fort of Life against the Confederate Force of so many Infirmities as besieged it, he then disposed himself for a Surrender.

In the first place, Having formerly, in better Health, made his Will, and settled his Temporal Affairs, he now dismissed all Business, forbid all impertinent Talk, all troublesome Visitors, and discharged his Physicians also, as finding no farther Use of them; and forthwith sent for the Physician of his Soul, the Minister of his Parish; a plain, hearty, and sincerely good Man. And he being come, my Friend addresses himself to him, giving him hearty Thanks for all the Pains he had taken in the Course of his Ministry in that Place, to do their Souls good. *Wherein (saith he) it hath pleased God so to order it, that you have often come home to my Case, and touched the very Distemper of my Heart, as if you had been within me; for which I humbly thank Almighty God, and again and again thank you; and pray God reward it in another World.*

Now, Sir, (proceeded he) *that great Judge of all the World is calling me to Account of all the Actions of my Life; I have therefore sent for you to audite them before-hand, that so, by your Assistance, I may either know my Errours, and repair whatsoever is amiss, whilst yet I have a little Time left me to do it in; or, if I have stated my Matters rightly, may appear with the better Assurance at that Tribunal. I have always found you faithful in your Doctrine, and I do not doubt but you will be impartial in this Application.*

At this Point I offered to go out, and leave them private ; which he perceiving, took me by one Hand, and the Minister by the other, and then continued his Discourse. *I will give you (said he to the Minister) the History of my Life ; at least, I will not conceal from you any main Passage of it, be it for me, or against me ; that so you may pass a Judgment upon my spiritual State : And I desire you, my dear Friend Sebastian, to be present, who have been privy to the most critical Moments of it ; to the intent that you may witness against me before this Man of God, if I falsifie in any Thing.* This said, he laid open the Course of his Life ; and, amongst several other Things, which either I do not now so well remember, or think not fit to repeat, he delivered the Substance of that, whereof I have given you a large Account before ; and then he conjured him, in the Name of God, to deal freely and plainly with him upon the whole Matter.

The holy Man, (like a Jury, in a manifest Case) without long *Deliberation*, quickly brought in a Verdict of Comfort to him. Which when Enlaby perceived, with his Eyes fix'd upon him, and a Countenance somewhat cheared ; *Well,* said he, *God be thanked, if it be so, as I hope it is ; for I rest assured, Almighty Goodness despises not the meanest Sincerity. But I humbly and earnestly beseech you, Sir, give me also the Absolution of the Church, that I may go out of the World under the Comfort of so publick and authentick a Testimony.* Which when the Minister had solemnly performed, he intreated him farther, to administer to him the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; *That* (said he) *seeing, as it were, my Saviour crucified before my Eyes, and pouring out his Blood for Sinners ;*

Sinners, I may the more firmly believe the Pardon of my own Sins, and upon the Wings of Faith and Affection raise my self towards Heaven.

This, after the Interposition of Prayers and Meditation, and holy Discourse, was administered to him: But, Lord! What an Ecstasy of Devotion was the *good Man* now in! What Tokens of Humility, Affection, Thankfulness, and Intention of Mind were then to be read in his Countenance and Deportment! Most certainly, Christ Jesus was present really, tho not carnally; and his Soul fed it self most favourably upon him. These Things being done, he dismissed the Minister for that Time, not without real Expressions of his *Thankfulness* to him for his Pains and Assistance, not without a liberal Alms to be disposed at his Discretion amongst the Poor; earnestly intreating him to remember him constantly in the Prayers of *the Church*, that thereby he might be holpen on his Journey towards Heaven, where he hoped shortly to arrive.

Some Time after this, when by some Repose he had recovered a little Strength, his Family was call'd together to his Bed-side, with some others of his Friends and Relations; all whom he most earnestly cautioned against Loosness of Life, and Prophaneness of Spirit; assuring them, in the Words of a dying Man, of the great Reality, and infinite Importance of Religion. He charged them, as they would answer it at that great Day which was certainly coming, that they should not suffer themselves, either to be debauched into Carelessness and Lukewarmness, nor abused and cheated into Fantasy and Opinionativeness in Religion; but persist in the good old Way, reverence their Minister, keep to their Church,

Church, and make the Serving of God the greatest Care and Business of their Lives. Then he discoursed admirably to them of the Vanity of the World, the Uncertainty of Life, the Comforts of Religion, and the Joys of Heaven, till his Spirits began to be spent, and his Speech a little to falter. At other Times he retreated into himself, and entertain'd Converse with *God* by Prayers, and holy Meditations; in which, what are the Elevations of his Faith, what the holy Raptures of his Love, what humble Abjections of himself at the Feet of *Christ*, what Resignations of himself to the Will of God, what Pleading of the Promises of the Gospel, and Recumbency upon the Intercession of his Saviour, we could not be privy to, farther than as we saw his Hands and Eyes earnestly lift up to Heaven; sometimes a Stream of Tears falling from his Eyes, and other times, interchangeably, a chearful Smile sitting upon his Countenance. In which Posture, bodily Strength being now exhausted, he, with a gentle Sigh, resigned up his Soul to God.

Thus I have given you the last Passages of this good Man, (now, no doubt, in Heaven) if I have not tired you with the Relation; tho, I confess, I am not very apt to suspect that, both because I have done it in Compliance with your Desire; and besides, I judge of other Men by myself, and because I am never weary of thinking or speaking of him, therefore imagine other Men may be of the same Mind.

Phil. Ah, Sir! So far from being weary of such kind of Discourse, that I could willingly have forgot all other Things for it, and been glad this *Evening-Conference* had continued till
to

to Morrow Morning : But I consider, Devotion must not too much intrench upon Civility ; therefore I return you my hearty Thanks for my good Entertainment, and take my Leave for this Time.

Bioph. I thank you both for your good Company, and your charitable Offices towards my Satisfaction ; and I do already assure you of this Fruit of it, that by your Conversation I have learnt, that all Religion is not acting a part, and playing the Hypocrite, which I was apt to suspect heretofore ; for I see you are so really hearty, and in earnest in it, and yet Men of greater Sagacity than my self, that I tell you truly, I begin to think it becomes me, seriously to consider of it. Good Night to you, good *Sebastian.*

The End of the Second Conference.

A
Winter-Evening
CONFERENCE

BETWEEN
NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

By J. GOODMAN, D.D.

Φθείρουσιν ἐν τῇ γρηγοῦσῃ ὁμιλίᾳ κακὰ.
Ex Menand. in Thaide.

Evil Communications corrupt good Manners.
1 Cor. 15. 33.

L O N D O N,

Printed by W. B. for L. Meredith, at the
Star in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1700.

IMPRIMATUR.

*C. Alston, R. P. D.
Hen. Episc. Lond.
a Sacris.*

Jan. 10.

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T O T H E

R E A D E R.

THE Papers before thee contain a Relation of a Third Conference, between the same Persons who held the two former, (which were made publick about two year: since.) And this is pursuant of the same general Design that was then laid, namely, to raise the rate and subject of Mens Conversation, and to bring religious Discourse a little more into fashion: than which nothing can be more gentile and manly, nor any thing either more useful, pleasant or graceful, when once Men are accustomed to it, and know how to manage it with an equal temperature of affection and gravity.

The special matter of the present Conference is joyntly to represent, as well the prudence and comfortableness, as the just reason and necessity of Religion.

And whether that great point be here made out with that clear evidence which such a Subject deserves and requires, must be left to thy judgment.

To the Reader.

But if I shall not be thought too much a Party to interpose my Opinion, I profess sincerely that I verily think both the interest of Piety and of comfortable living are hereby considerably promoted.

And as for the Persons that spent their Winter-Evening in this manner; I can assure thee, that they are so well satisfied in this employment of their time, that (though probably thou wilt never hear more of them in Print, yet) they are resolved to continue this course privately among themselves; as finding it to be both more delightful, and more profitable, than either Coffee-House-Club or Tavern-Assignations.

That which I am to request of thee at present is, That thou wilt consult thy Reason and Conscience in the perusal of these Papers, and (for the time at least) lay aside Drolling Wit and Phantastry: For I am well aware, that if thou canst find in thy Heart to trifle in so serious a Concern, thou mayst raise a Prejudice in thy self and others against what is here presented: for that temper will easily apprehend several little things to play upon in this way of writing.

But if thou wilt use that Candour with which the former Essays of this kind were entertained, thou wilt then look attentively

To the Reader.

at the main Design, and finding that to be both pious and generous, dispose thy self to make such allowances for Circumstances as use to be made to private Conversation amongst Friends and Neighbours, considering that in those Cases Men usually speak with almost the same security that they think.

There is one thing more which I am obliged to Preface on the behalf of Sebastian; That whereas in the proving to Biophilus, That there is a God, and in explicating the Divine Nature, he hath made use of two or three Metaphysical Terms, thou wilt not impute it either to his Affectation of hard words; or much less think that he takes Sanctuary in obscure Phrases: but rather consider that it was impossible to avoid them without multiplying words, and so drawing the Argument out at so great a length, as would have been much more inconvenient than that which thou complainest of.

I add no more, but heartily commend this little Book to thy acceptance, and thee to the Grace of God, and the comforts of his Holy Spirit.

Farewel.

*The Characters of the Persons in
the following Conference.*

S*ebastian*, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all occasions of engaging those he converses with, in sobriety and a sense of Religion.

Philander, a Gentile and Ingenious Person, but too much addicted to the Lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the Life to come; and therefore consequently was much concerned for the present Life. Till at length awakened by the discreet Reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

The ARGUMENT of the Third CONFERENCE.

Sebastian and Philander, two very good Men and intimate Friends, meeting together at the House of Biophilus, (in pursuance of a former Resolution taken between them) under the Allegorical disguise of a Journey to Urania, begin to talk warmly of Religion and another World. Biophilus, who had never yet entertained any serious Apprehensions of those Matters, wonders at their Discourse, which he esteems to be no better than Romanatick, and professes his suspicion, that either Wine had heated them, or Enthusiasm had transported them. Both which groundless conceits of his, when Sebastian had effectually confuted, he then proceeds to make a twofold Effort upon Biophilus, to bring him into the same sense of things with himself and Philander. In the former he attacks him where he thought he was most accessible; and upon the account of prudence, and the common concern of self-preservation, presses him to a regard of Religion, as that without which no Man can either live or die comfortably. And when by this means he had in some measure dispo-

sed him to be serious, he then in the second place represents to him the whole Scheme of Religion, and now renders it as rational in it self, as before he had shewed it to be prudent and important. Hereupon the Sceptical Gentleman, after abundance of shifts and evasions, is at last brought to a Non-plus. And thenceforth begins to enquire very modestly into the nature of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular; which when Sebastian had also instructed him in, he promises to study it diligently for the time to come. Then Sebastian and Philander leaving him under that good resolution, entertain one another with very pious and useful Discourses, partly of the necessity of constancy in Religion, and the considerations that will maintain it, partly of the means of obtaining and preserving an even temper of spiritual comfort through the whole course of a Christian Life. And so the Night parts them.

A Winter-Evening
CONFERENCE
BETWEEN
NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

*Sebastian, Philander, Bio-
philus.*

Sebastian. **W**ELL met again, Gentle-
men; I hope we shall one
day meet in Heaven.

Philander. God grant it, good *Sebastian*;
and truly for my part, I am persuaded we shall
the sooner come there, the more we have of
your Company and Conversation in the mean
time.

Sebast. No Complements, *Philander*; I am
glad to observe you so chearful. Come, Gen-
tlemen, what think you of our Journey, I hope
by

by this time *Biophilus* is resolved: You promised, Sir, to consider of it.

Biophilus, I have considered a little, but in truth I think Winter no good time for travelling, especially for the undertaking of so long a Journey.

Sebast. Be not discouraged, Sir, the Journey is not so long as perhaps you may fancy it to be; and the way is so very good, that it is but taking up a good Resolution, and we shall be there presently.

Phil. Nay (if I mistake not) we may make some considerable advance that way, even as we now sit by the Fire-side.

Bioph. You talk merrily, *Phil.* Like a Man that hath travelled all the World over in a Map, and yet never went beyond the Smoke of his own Chimney.

Sebast. You will think it strange perhaps, but it's very true, that no time so good as Winter for this Expedition; the short days, dark and cold nights, the very dirt and wet, and all the seeming disadvantages of the Sea-

Winter and Old Age are peculiar Seasons for the business of another World.

son (which probably may run in your Head, *Biophilus*) all make for our purpose. The Severities of the Weather which constrain us to lay aside other business, give us the more leisure to attend this; the short Days are followed with long Evenings, which afford us opportunity to set things in order, to discourse together, and to instruct and animate one another in our intended Enterprize; and in the dark solitary Nights (our Minds being then free from the distra-

distraction of variety of Objects) our thoughts will run this way with wonderful speed, if we do but direct them aright. So that (as *Philander* said) in truth we may so order it, as to make real progress towards our designed Port, even as we sit here.

Bioph. Nay, if *Philander* have such a Voucher, I know not what to say; but in earnest, I am somewhat too old and crazie to undertake the Journey.

Sebast. Nay, believe me, the older the better. An old Man, if he set to it in earnest, will outstrip all others in this Voyage; such Men will lose no time in trifles; experience hath taught them caution, and made them very wary of all diversions and impediments, and they have less clog of flesh and blood about them. In short, such Men are so sensible of the inconveniences of this our present Countrey, that it is great odds, but they will put on so vigorously, as to get to their Journey's end before the youngest of us all. Besides all which it is very considerable, that the older and more infirm any Man is, the more need he hath of the relief of that benign and wholesome air, and to be at rest in that quiet and peaceable Region of *Urania*, *whither we are going.

* See Conf. II.
Pag. 125.

Bioph. I see you are too many for me at this way of Drollery; but now that I know whereabouts you are, I must be forced to tell you plainly, that (though I very much esteem your Company) I am sorry you are fallen again upon this Romance of *Urania*: Is it not time to lay aside this new kind of Knight-Errantry.

Sebast.

Sebast. You may remember, *Biophilus*, (by what passed between us at our last meeting) that by *Urania* we mean nothing less than the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and by taking a Journey thither, we (consequently) intend nothing else than *Religion* and a devout prosecution of happiness in another World. Now therefore, if you will not be persuaded to bear us Company in the Expedition, yet can you find in your heart to reproach either the end or the means (as you seem to doe) the former under the contemptible name of a Romance, and the latter by that of Knight-Errantry.

What, in the Name of God do you call Realities, if these things be Romantick? As for the present World, it is notoriously a mere piece of Pageantry, and all the glory of it passes away in a vain shew; and if in it self it were not altogether so inconsiderable as experience shews it to be, yet humane life is so very short, that a Man can be little more than a Spectator of that Pomp as it passes by him. For by that time he begins to live, he more than begins to die. Either therefore there must be another Life and a World to come in reality, or else nothing at all is so, but all is Romance indeed.

Bioph. I cry you mercy, if I used an indecent Expression. I did not intend to given any offence, nor is it either my temper or custom to put affronts upon other Mens Persuasions; but I appeal to you, *Sebastian*, (as a Man of Judgment) what name ought I to call that thing by, of which (when I hear Men talk confidently)

ly) I have notwithstanding neither any sense in my own Mind, nor see any rational ground to believe it.

Sebast. I acknowledge your Civility, good *Biophilus*, and in answer to your Question, I tell you truly, that without any offence to me you may call that thing by what name you please, of which no rational

Serious Consideration necessary to Religion.

account can be given (let Men talk as confidently of it as they will) provided you have taken full Information about it, and have so maturely and impartially considered of it, that you may be thought a competent Judge in the Case: But otherwise, let me tell you, you may happen to call some of the most certain truths in nature by some such opprobrious names; forasmuch as some very certain things may on the sudden, and at the first glimpse, seem not only mere Paradoxes, but utter Impossibilities; which yet afterwards, upon more deliberate inquiry, will abundantly confute that censure by their own Evidence.

And even in sensible perceptions, you know it is not sufficient that a Man have eyes in his head, but there must be a fit disposition of those eyes, a proper *medium* or well disposed air, convenient light, due distance of the object, and competent time for our senses to survey and take hold of it, or else we shall make no true estimate of that which is presented to us. Now if you transfer this to Religion, and imitate the same care and caution in judging of that, you will doubtless be so far from concluding it to be a Romance, that you will find it not only recom-

recommended to you by the wisdom and experience of all the World, but agreeable to the reason of your own Mind, and to the internal sense of your own Conscience. And which is more, you will observe the belief of those things whereupon it is founded to be so necessary, and of such moment and consequence, as that they will appear to be the very Pillars of the World, the Bond of humane Society, and the very things wherein your own nearest and most peculiar interest is involved; insomuch, that it will be utterly impossible that you should either live or die comfortably without an hearty persuasion of them.

Bioph. Now you speak like your self, and I understand you, but I hope I understand my self better than to be willing to be reputed an enemy to Civil Society, or much less to be an enemy to my self; let me therefore see those two things (which you last mentioned) clearly made out, and (without farther trouble to you) I shall think my self obliged to take new measures, or at least to make more diligent inquiry into this affair.

Sebast. Though I should have been right glad to have found you better resolved, and hoped that this present Conference should rather have been directed to the encouraging one another in our course, than spent in disputing our Part; yet in hopes that at length you will become a Votary for the *Holy-Land*, I will comply with your desires, and represent to you the evidence of those two things you insist upon.

And for the first, you will easily be sensible of the influence of Religion upon Civil Society,

ciety, when you consider how inconceivable it is, that mere external force, or fear of humane punishment, should be sufficient to keep the World in order, when (as it often happens) lewd and flagitious Men shall find themselves either secured from that danger by the secrecy of their Plots, or protected by their strength and multitude. And then you must acknowledge that to the ends aforesaid there is a necessity that some superiour power not only protect Governours from violence, but also strike the Minds of Men with an awful Apprehension of them as his Favourites and Vicegerents; but this cannot be done but upon such Principles of Religion as we now speak of; therefore he that infringes that, weakens both Law and Government, and is an Enemy to Civil Society.

The danger of irreligion to Civil Society.

Again, there can be no Obligation of Oaths, and consequently no security of Faith and Trust between Man and Man, but upon supposition of a God that takes notice of what Men doe, and who will call them to an account accordingly in another World: so that the Man who is destitute of these Persuasions, can neither give security of his Loyalty to his Prince, nor of Fidelity to his Friend or Neighbour, or any Man he deals with.

Bioph. Why, I pray you, *Sebastian*, may not Men trust one another upon the security of honour, good nature, or gratitude, or some such Obligation, without those fetters of Conscience which you speak of?

Sebast.

Sebast. Alas, alas, *Biophilus*, all those bonds which you mention are too weak to restrain the licentious humour of Mind; they may put some little byass upon Mens Spirits, but they cannot bridle their Passions, curb their desire of Revenge, nor prevail with them to deny their extravagant Interests and Inclinations, when they shall have an opportunity to gratifie any of them, as we find by daily experience. For in all the Obligations (below Religion and Conscience) a Man is supposed to be accountable only to himself; and therefore may dispense with himself, and acquit himself upon what terms he pleases. And therefore wise Men, and especially wise Princes, use not to trust to any of those defeisible Securities but only to that of Religion,

Bioph. Well, but have not pretenders to Religion played fast and loose with Laws and Government, as well as other Men? Nay, generally you shall observe, that a Bigotted sort of Men are the principal Conspirators and Actors of most of the Tumults and Disorders in the World.

Sebast. If I should object to you the daily and horrible Violations of Faith amongst the Pretenders to Honour, Ingenuity and Gratitude, I know you would answer me, That those Persons were not really Men of Honour, &c. but only Pretenders. And so you may answer your self in this case, namely, That they are but Pretenders to the real Principles of Religion, that falsifie their Faith and disturb Government.

Besides, if I should grant you, That the very Bonds of Religion are not able always to restrain the rage and folly of some exorbitant Persons; yet certainly it is the most powerful means amongst Mankind to that end, and incomparably beyond all those you have named, for the sake of that reason I have already given you. And therefore (as I was about to say) you may remember, when upon occasion, *Ptolemy* King of *Egypt*, sent one *Theodorus*, in the quality of his Embassador, to *Lyfimachus*: this latter refuses to treat with him, or admit him under that Character, because he was reputed an Atheist; and being such, he looked upon him as a Person with whom there could be no security of civil intercourse.

Bioph. I remember the Story, but I pray you then (by the way) if *Lyfimachus's* Objection against *Theodorus* was sufficient, how came *Ptolemy* notwithstanding to trust him with the management of his affairs?

Sebast. Truly I can give you no other Answer, but that it seems he did not well understand the loose tenure of an Atheist, nor had so much prudence as his Neighbour. But let that pass, if you please, and give me leave in the next place to represent to you every Man's personal concern in the truth of Religion, which is such (as I intimated before) that no Man can either live or die comfortably without it.

Bioph. Ay, with all my Heart. Let Princes and States alone to manage their own matters. Shew me but that one Point you last mentioned, and it shall suffice in the present case.

Sebast. For that, *Biophilus*, you will easily apprehend, that no Man can die chearfully without the supports of Religion (I mean if he die sensibly, and with his wits about him) because the very best of such a Man's Game, and the summ of his expectations can be but this, That he shall die like the Beast, and that vital principle in him which we call the Soul, shall be absolutely extinguish'd: so that he shall

Death very uncomfortable without the supports of Religion.

thenceforth as perfectly cease to be what he was, as if he had never been. Now this I suppose you will readily grant me, must needs be not only a very uncomfortable prospect, but such a condition as a Man cannot think of without just abhorrence, nor be reconciled to, without as great a contradiction, as it were for him to be supposed to hate his own being, which surely is impossible.

Yet (as I said) this is the very best of the irreligious Man's case, and that which he can never be secure, will be the worst that shall befall him; for if it shall prove in the issue of things, that there is another World (and at least it may do so for ought he knows) then his case is so much worse, as that now by Death he must enter upon an estate for ever, which he hath had no foresight of, nor made any preparations for. He encounters a God, whom he hath taken no care to propitiate towards himself in all the course of his Life, by any Acts of Piety and Devotion, and what a dismal plunge must the approaches of Death (together with such a surprisal) of necessity put such a Man into.

Bioph.

Bioph. As for Death, I shall easily grant all you say, for that is no very comfortable thing at the best; the only refuge I know is, to make a vertue of necessity, and seeing die we must, to take it patiently: but for that reason I am resolved to live as long as I can, and as chearfully too, and why may not this be done without the business of Religion?

Sebast. In truth, *Biophilus*, the Impossibility of living comfortably, without the helps of Religion, is every whit as evident as that of dying so, and for the very same reason; forasmuch as what-

No Man can live comfortably, but upon the grounds of Religion:

soever renders Death terrible, must needs make Life uneasy too. For since Death is acknowledged to be unavoidable, it cannot chuse but run continually in such a Man's Head, Shortly I must die, and either everlastingly cease to be, or (which is far worse) begin to be eternally miserable: The least of which two things (without the miserable refuge of a perpetual Debauch to keep such a Man from thinking) must be of force enough to make his Heart ake, and to spoil all the pleasures of the present Life: Especially considering withal, the uncertainty of the tenure, and the innumerable accidents of Humane Life; which last circumstance makes it to become just matter of fear at all times, that by some or other of those accidents of Mortality, his frail Thread may abruptly be broken; and consequently who knows but by to morrow, not only all his Projects and Contrivances, but all his Delights and Entertainments will suffer a total Interruption.

But then, if there be a God and another World (which he can never be sure that there is not) then he can expect nothing less than very suddenly to fall under the vengeance of that great Majesty whom he hath always provoked and never appeased.

Besides all this, as we commonly observe, that

*The causes of
the timorousness
of Atheists:*

Atheistical Persons are of all Men the most timorous; so there is great reason for it, if we consider what a dark and melancholy thing it must needs be, for so impotent a Creature as Man is, to live in a World without a God, and without the security of a Providence; for there are a thousand things confessedly too strong for us, and which are able to crush and destroy us every moment. And in this case, where a Man hath no help in himself, if he have no Guardian about him neither, if (I say) he cannot look up to some higher Being as his Patron and Protector; it were mere madness to be Valiant: for all the grounds of Courage fail him, and therefore no wonder if his Spirits be broken and baffled by the danger of his Case, and the lonesomness of his Condition.

Upon which account a Person of Honour, and a great Wit of this present Age acknowledged some time before his Death; "That,

*Late Earl of
Rochester.*

" although he for his part,
" had no feeling of the com-
" forts of Religion, yet he
" accounted those to be hap-
" py Men that could and did live under the ad-
" vantage of it. For indeed, life is not life with-
out

out those supports which that (and that only) affords us. But when a Man hath, by the benefit of that holy prudence, put all his interest into God's custody, and secured himself of another World, then he begins to live indeed, then he may laugh at the present World, despise temporal Life, and defie Death; forasmuch as thenceforth he is out of the reach of Chance, Fate, or Fortune.

Phil. 'Tis true, *Biophilus*, 'tis true, as *Sebastian* saith, the World to come is the only reallity, and Religion the only Comfort. O happy we that know there is a God in the World, under whose Providence we live! and blessed be that Divine Goodness, which hath provided another World to receive us, and there promised us eternal Life.

Philander ravished with the comforts of Religion.

O *Urania*, *Urania*, (Heaven I mean) thou end of Cares and Fears, and beginning of Joy without end! thou rest of Souls, and only satisfaction of great and wise Minds! I am ravish'd with the thoughts of thee; I am so transported with Hopes of thee, that I am become all Life and Spirit; methinks I begin to have Wings, and could fly to Heaven.

Bioph. Sebastian speaks shrewdly, I confess, but you, *Philander* are too high a Flyer for me; you are so much in the Altitudes, that you must pardon me, if I a little suspect that you have (according to your former custom) been taking of a chearful Cup, which as a Wise Man observes, *Makes Men speak all things by Talents*, 1 Esdr. 3. 21.

Phil. You are in the very right of it, *Biophilus*, I have taken a Dose, and a lusty one too (as

Sebastian will be my witness) so that I find myself not a little elevated at this time. But, mistake me not, it is not with Drink; no (tho' I say it) I am grown a better Husband, and more frugal of my time, than to spend it on a Debauch: (Or if you will) I am become a great Coward, and am afraid of an after-reckoning.

Bioph. What reckoning, Man?

The sin and danger of Drunkenness, and that the pleasures of it are false and delusory.

Phil. Nay, no other than that which *Sebastian* hath given us warning of, *the judgment to come*. For I must tell you, I very much doubt whether God Almighty (who hath endowed us with noble Faculties, and thereby seems to have designed us for excellent Purposes, and who hath also appointed our time to be but short in this World) will take it well at our Hands, that we should drown the one, and drivel away the other in Sensuality.

Bioph. Now you grow serious, but what made you so brisk even now? In truth I suspected you might have been bitten with your own Dog (as they say) and had prevented the Civility of my House by a liberal Glass at home.

Phil. O *Biophilus*, I thank God, I am come to that pass now, that I can dance without a Fiddle, and be merry without the aid of the Bottle, and I look upon those Men to be in a very pitiable Condition that cannot do so. For I have learned by my former unhappy experience, that those *liquid Consolations* are mere cheats and palliative cures of Melancholy; and tho' perhaps a Man may by the help of them rid himself of the trouble of his own thoughts for the present

present (which is all that Wine can pretend to) yet he doth but reprieve himself for a time, and he will find himself again just where he was, as soon as he becomes sober; for Conscience is not to be totally drowned in Drink, nor the clamor thereof to be deaded by the noise of Huzza's.

Sebast. It is very true which *Philander* saith; for generally the Mirth of a Debauch, as it is strained and artificial, so it cannot last long; it is at best but like the effects of a strong Cordial, which may serve to rally the Spirits for some present encounter, but then they are spent in the Conflict, and fall and flag again quickly after; or like those mighty efforts which you shall observe some Persons to make in a Convulsion, the result of which will be, that such a Man shall become so much less than himself after the Fit, as he was more than himself whilst it was upon him: for any Man shall find, that whensoever the Spirits are extraordinarily exhilarated and dilated, they thereby become so thin and volatile, that they easily exhale and vanish, and so a Man becomes far more melancholy and lumpish after, than he was before.

But now in Intellectual delights and entertainments, wherein a Man may be merry and wise together, and so have no fear of an after-reckoning to pall the present Enjoyment, and especially in such Pleasures as come in upon the account of Religion, they afford a still and sedate delight, which refresh the Heart more than dilate the Countenance, and gently raise and strengthen the Spirits, but do not in any Measure exhaust them.

Bioph. You discourse ingeniously, *Sebastian*, but sure you have not mended the Matter; for it is as good to be drunk with Wine as with Conceitedness, which is the more lasting Distemper; and I pray let me see if you can excuse this transport of *Philander* from Fanaticism, as well as from that which I at first suspected, for sure it must be one of them

That religious Joy is not fanatical, and the nature of Fanaticism explained.

Sebast. Why, *Biophilus*, do you think a Man cannot be Cheerful, unless he be either Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. It seems then, in your opinion, Fanaticism is Madness.

Sebast. Truly, Sir, I profess to you, I take it to be little better; especially, if it be in any high Degree. For what (I pray you) is it to be Mad, but for a Man's Fancy or Passions to get head of him, that he is hurried on wildly and extravagantly by such an unaccountable *impetus*, as that his Reason (the common Principle of Mankind) is not able to restrain or govern him? And on the other side, what is it for a Man to fear without Danger, and to hope without Ground; to believe without Reason, and to think, and speak, or do such Things, whereof he can give no account which is intelligible by the rest of Mankind? This I take to be Fanaticism; and this is as plainly a Disease and a Fit of the Body, as those Convulsions which we spake of but now.

As for Example, if you shall observe a Man pretend to believe plain impossibilities, and not only Supinely and Credulously swallow them, but confidently avouch and maintain them; it may

may be in regard of his Seriousness and good Meaning, you will call him an Enthusiast or Fanatick: Yet forasmuch as you are satisfied that the Things he is so confident of, are Contradictions to the common Sense and Experience of Mankind (notwithstanding his Confidence and Devotion) you will conclude he is governed by other Principles than those of a Man, and consequently, that he is besides himself, and under some degree of Madness.

Again, When you see a Man, who can make no Pretence to any Character of publick Authority, nor can give any sufficient Proof of any special and extraordinary Commission from God Almighty, shall notwithstanding be acted by such a heady and intemperate Zeal, as to supersede the publick Magistrate, and take upon himself to govern and reform the World; this indeed is Fanaticism, but it cannot be acquitted of some Spice of Madness withall.

Or lastly (to come more home to you) When a Man shall be perplexed with endless Scruples, and Fears and Doubts of the Danger and Damableness of such Things as are manifestly the Violation of no Law, and shall be dejected in his Conscience, and ready to sink into Desperation; at such time as yet he is not conscious to himself of either omitting any known Duty, or committing any wicked Thing: Or on the other side, When such a Man shall run into the other Extream, and be transported with Joy, and ravished with Comfort; but upon no more intelligible Grounds, than he had before for his Fears and Dejections of Spirit. Both these Cases may be very pitiable, but they are as well plain

plain Symptoms of a crazy Mind, as they are Instances of Fanaticism. But -----

Bioph. I am very glad to hear these Things from you, *Sebastian*, and that you have so slight an Opinion of that Sort of Men, who make such a Figure, or rather such a Dust in the World.

Sebast. So far then we are agreed, but by your Favour, I believe all this which I have said will make nothing towards the Proof of your Charge against *Philander*; for though I impute Unreasonable and Extravagant Raptures to Fancy rather than to Faith, and account them rather a Distemper of the Body than the Devotion of the Mind: yet I must tell you after all, that True and Manly Religion is no cold and comfortless Thing, it is not a lukewarm Notionality, not a formal and bayardly round of Duties, not a dull *temperamentum ad pondus*, as they call it, but is lively, vigorous and sparkling, and hath its Joys and Ravishments too; only they are more sedate and governable, as well as more rational and accountable, than those we spake of before; and so I suppose you will find it to be with *Philander*: He hath express'd some heat, but not without light, and is both able to govern his Expressions, and to give you a sober Reason of them.

Phil. Hearty Thanks, dear *Sebastian*, for vindicating me from the mis-apprehensions my innocent joy had expos'd me to with *Biophilus*; and herein you have not only done me a kindness, but oblig'd all good Men, and done a right to true Piety it self, which is apt to be put out of Countenance with the Imputation of

of Fanaticism, and so far it suffers thereby, that a great many well-disposed (but over bashful and timorous) Men are tempted to a very strange kind of Hypocrisie, and to pretend themselves worse than they are, and to trim it off in the indifferent strain of the World, for fear of incurring the Censure of being Zealots and Bigots in Religion.

But now I shall take heart, and adventure to let my Light shine out abroad, as well as burn within my

*The true Grounds of
Comfort in Religion.*

Breast. And I cannot forbear upon this occasion to return my most humble Thanks to God Almighty, who hath given me cause to hope in his Goodness, and the Cordial of that Hope hath in some measure antidoted me against the Troubles and Vexations of this present World; for I profess to you, there is so much of Care and Fear, of Labour and Pain, of Sorrow and Disquiet here below, what by cross Accidents and Disappointments, what by the Malice of evil Men, or by the Follies, Peevishness, and Jealousies of weak and silly Men, that were it not for the prospect of a better State of things above, and of Rest and Peace, Stability and Satisfaction in another World, I should be very far from being fond of this present Life. But now when I consider and am satisfied, that at the worst I am under a Providence, so that nothing befalls by Chance, or by the mere will of Man, but by Divine Appointment and Ordination; and consequently there is nothing but what he both can and will make to work for Good in the Conclusion:

And

And when withall I find my self resolved to submit to his wise purposes, by which means it is in my Power to be wiser and better by all Occurrences; and in so doing, have my Hopes improved into some Measure of Assurance, that I shall in due time be translated into those happy Regions above. This comforts my Heart under all the present Inconveniencies, and not only supports my Spirits, but chears them, and refreshes my very Countenance. And sometimes it happens, that the more the Vexations of the World had depress'd me, the higher do these Contemplations raise me; so that I break out into such an holy Triumph and Bravery, as that which you (*Biophilus*) took notice of in me since we came together.

Sebast. What think you now, *Biophilus*, is *Philander* Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. No, I acknowledge he speaks like a Man, or an Angel rather (if there were any such thing) but still I suspect there is some Trick or other in it; I cannot satisfy my self in these religious Braveries, as he calls them.

Sebast. Why, *Biophilus*, what is there to amuze you in this matter? Consider with your self, how can it be otherwise, but that he who is thoroughly satisfied that it is neither blind Chance, nor surly Fate, nor some Ill-natur'd and Unlucky Being; but contrariwise, a Great and Wise and Good God, that governs the World: how can it be (I say) but that such a Man must needs be very Comfortable under such a Protection?

Or how can it come to pass that a Man that lives Vertuously and Piously, who approves him-
self

self to his own Reason and Conscience, and as near as he can, to the Mind of that Great God, who made and governs the World, should be tormented with pannick Fears of he knows not what; since, whether he looks upward or downward, into himself or abroad, there is Nothing can hurt him: Nothing but what must needs cheer him with an hopeful expectation of a good issue of such a course in the upshot of things; especially if with-
 all he have a firm belief of
 Eternal Life in another
 World, and of unspeakable
 Joy and Felicity there attain-
 nable, and certainly to be enjoyed by him
 that pursues it in his Life by such a course of
 Vertue and Piety as aforesaid. How can you
 imagine that such a Man should be down in the
 mouth (as we say) or dull and out of Hu-
 mour? Nay, rather, how is it possible he should
 be able to smother such Hopes, and conceal
 such Joys? No, they are too great to be kept
 secret in his bosom; they will break out now
 and then in triumphant expressions.

*The admirable and
 unspeakable consolati-
 on of believing Eter-
 nal Life*

Eternity, *Biophilus*, Eternal Life (I mean) is so great, so glorious, so admirable an happiness, that I can never be persuaded that Man really believes it, and hath any good measure of hopes that he shall attain it, who can be so reserved and Stoical, as to keep his countenance whenever he thinks of it.

Do but judge with your self, if you could have ground to believe you should never forgo this present Life, but for ever enjoy your House, your Wife and Children, nor ever be parted
 from

from those wise and good Friends you have made choice of; that no Accident, no Disease, nor Malice of Men or evil Spirits could reach you; but you might pursue your Designs, and meet with nothing to interrupt the Train of your Thoughts and Projections, so that you could know Death only in Speculation; in this Case you may easily imagine, how much at ease a Man's Thoughts would be, how secure his Mind, how bold his Spirit, and how chearful his Countenance. But now to live for ever in the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be not only secure from all Pain or Care, Fear or Danger, but to be in the Possession of perfect and consummate Bliss, to enjoy the Favour of God, the Presence of the ever-blessed *Jesus*, and the perpetual Society of all good Men made perfect, and free from their Ignorances, Errors, Passions and Infirmities. This is a State of Life that I protest I cannot think of without Astonishment, nor speak of without a Passion, nor hope for without a Rapture.

Bioph. I should easily consent to you in all this, *Sebastian*, if I thought it was real; for I am neither so fond of a Grave, as not to be desirous to live as long as it is possible, nor so severe to my self, as to be willing to want any of those Comforts of Life and Supports in Death that are attainable; but in truth, I suspect all these great Things, *Philander*, that you talk of, to be but pleasant Dreams, and the high rants of Fancy.

Sebast. But why should you think so, *Biophilus*, seeing it is very plain, that the soberest and best Men are of this Persuasion; and for the
most

most part, the better the Men are, the more lively is their sense of these Things. Can you imagine that either God Almighty should put a Cheat upon the very Best of Mankind (and upon them especially?) or can you think, that the Best of Men should be the greatest Lyars, and pretend to that of which they had no real Grounds? I pray therefore be free with me, and tell me the Causes of your Mistrust in this Case.

Bioph. I think I have Reason to doubt these high Pretences to the wonderful Comforts of Religion; in the first place, because I observe the State of Mankind to be generally very uneasy, and the World to be full of nothing more than Melancholy and Complaint which sure could not be, if there were such effectual Remedies ready at Hand, and such an Hearts-ease in Religion.

Sebast. I will answer you in that presently, but I pray first tell me (by the way) what do you think is the reason that there are so many sickly and valetudinary People in the World?

Bioph. Truly I think we may resolve the greatest part of those long and tedious Distempers, under which so many People languish, into Surfeits and other Instances of their own Riot and Luxury.

Sebast. Very well, but you do not yet reach my meaning; I ask you therefore again, Do you not think that there are a great many amongst those that pine away under the aforesaid lingering Distempers, who might possibly receive help and ease, if they took due care of themselves?

Bioph.

Bioph. Yes doubtless, for in those chronical Diseases there is time for Advice and Application, and fit intermissions for Medicines to take place in; but the mischief is, some Men are humourfome and obstinate, and will take no Advice whatever comes of it: others deliver themselves up to Empiricks and unskilful Persons, who often make the Disease worse than it was; and then there are some so soft and delicate, that although they have good Advice given them, and might be cured, yet will not follow the Rules that are prescribed to them.

Sebast. Very good, now you have saved me the labour, and have answered your own Ob-

The Causes of the Uncomfortableness of Mens Spirits generally.

jection against the real Comfortableness of Religion: For there are the same three accounts to be assigned of the Uncomfortableness of Mens Spirits, which you have given of the sickly Estate of their Bodies, *viz.*

In the first place, there are some Men who fantasie themselves either too wise to be advised, or think the Case of Humane Nature too desperate to be cured; and therefore grow Morose and Sceptical, and will rather cloak themselves up in a musty melancholy Reservedness for the present, and run the venture of all for the future, than give themselves the trouble of any serious thoughts of Religion. Now you cannot expect that these Men should find the Comfort of Religion, who were so far from making Experiment of it, that they were afraid of it, like those wise Men that for fear they should one time or other be poisoned, will therefore never eat any Meat.

Bioph.

Bioph. If you would pardon my interrupting of you, I could tell you for all this, that there are some certain Men in the World (though not many I confess) who enjoy themselves very well, and yet never were in debt to any Religion for it.

Sebast. Very likely, *Biophilus*, for so, as I remember, King *John* killed a very fat Stag that had never heard Mass in its Life; and so you shall see an Ox in the Stall, let him but have Meat, and Drink, and Ease enough, he never repines at the approach of the Day of Slaughter: In like manner there are a sort of dull unthinking Men, that pass away their time in a pleasant Dream of Sensuality, and never feel any want of the Consolations of Religion; but it is not because there is no need of them, but because such Persons do not feel the need, nor indeed are sensible of any thing else that is Manly and Generous.

*How it comes to pass
that some Men seem to
live cheerfully with-
out God and Religion.*

If I should tell you it was dangerous being upon such a Precipice, I suppose you would not think it a Confutation of my Caution to tell me, that notwithstanding a certain blind Man slept and snored securely upon it; for real Danger is Danger whether Men be apprehensive of it or no: or if you should observe a poor Man to dream of Plenty and all the Affluence of the World, you will not count him to be as happy as he that really enjoys those Things; a Dream is one thing, and real Felicity is another: and though the former fancies himself for the present as Happy as the other, yet I am

sure you, who know one is asleep and the other awake, do not think it to be so. Thus it is in Religion.

Bioph. Your pardon again; it is not only true that some stupid and incapable Persons are at hearts-ease without Religion, but you shall observe some of a better mold, polite and ingenious Men, live very pleasantly, and yet are not beholden to Religion for it.

Sebast. It may be so; but then I doubt they must be beholden to the Bottle for it, which they must ply continually too, to keep them from thinking: for I have shewed you already, that it is as impossible for a thinking Man (out of a Debauch, and who cannot but be sensible that he must die) to be Comfortable without the Aids of some Religion or other; as it is for you or me to caper and frolick upon the brink of such a Precipice as we spoke of but now. In short, such Men as have Eyes in their Heads have no other Refuge but to wink hard, that they may not be sensible of their Danger.

And so much for that. Now if you please, I will proceed. In the second place then there is (as you well observed) another sort of Men, who, though they are not so refractory and contumacious as to defie the whole Art of Physick (as a perfect Cheat) yet out of Stinginess, or some other Folly, will apply themselves only to Quacks and Mountebanks, who instead of curing the present Infirmities, by unskilful Management, render them more dangerous and intolerable. So it is in this Case of Religion and the Minds of Men, there are those who do not abandon themselves to desperate Atheism,

not sceptically cast off all Care of Religion, but finding they cannot be at ease without some Regard of God, and Provision for another World; yet (not falling into the hands of those that were able to principle them right) entertain such imperfect and inconsistent Notions of Religion, as can really afford them no solid Consolation. And this is a second Cause why the World is so uncomfortable, notwithstanding all the relief that Religion pretends to give.

As for example, Suppose a Man believes there is a God, yet if he look upon him under the Notion of a cruel and unrelenting Tyrant, governed by mere will, and

*False Notions of
God and Religion
very uncomfortable.*

who aims at nothing but the securing and greatning his own power, and consequently is so far unconcerned for any of his Creatures, that it is all one to him whether they be saved or damned eternally; you will easily grant me, that the Belief of such a God cannot be very comfortable, since a Man cannot think of him, nor much less exercise any Act of Devotion towards him without Horrour and Astonishment.

Or again, Suppose a Man should entertain a less horrid Notion of God, as that though he be not such a Monster as the former rendered him: yet that he is a nice and captious Deity, very teachy and hard to please, that would make no candid and equitable Interpretation, nor allow of Sincerity and good Meaning, but must have his Mind to a tittle, and every thing must be done precisely according to Rule; and consequently, must needs be able to find fre-

quent occasions against his Creatures, and was likely as often to animadvert severely upon them. This must needs be a very uncomfortable Principle of Religion, as well as the former, since such a God is only the Object of Fear, and not of Love, and *all Fear hath Torment*, 1 John 4. 18.

Moreover, Put case a Man should have a more kindly and benign Notion of God, than either of the former, but yet finds himself perfectly at a loss how to please the Divine Majesty, and propitiate him towards himself; in regard he knows of no Declaration of his Mind and Will that he hath made, (because he either never heard of, or doth not believe the Holy Scriptures) it is impossible but that a Devout Mind in this Case must be very much perplexed and uneasie; and the more devout the Man is, the more will his Perplexity be, in regard that when he hath done all he can to please God, he cannot rest satisfied, whether he hath served or diserved him all the while. Which in a great measure was the condition of the gentile World, for lack of Divine Revelation; and therefore they were necessitated in their Devotions to make use of abundance of various Rites, in Hopes, that if one sort of them missed, the other might hit to be acceptable to the Deity. And when all was done, they were not sure that either, or any of them, was perfectly agreeable to his Mind: and therefore as their Devotion must needs be superstitious in the Nature of it; so consequently it must be attended with pannick Fears, and uncomfortable Apprehensions, as the Fruit of it.

Farthermore

Farthermore, Let us suppose a Man of so high an Attainment in Religion as that he had some Intimations of the Divine Will, as to matter of Fact, but yet was under a Dispensation of Religion, which (at least in the letter of it) consisted mainly of sundry nice and curious Observances; such as the abstaining from such or such Meats; the performing such or such Rites and Ceremonies; of none of which he could give himself any rational Account, or be conscious of any other Obligation to them, but only, this is commanded, and thus it must be (which was the case of the Superstitious *Jews*, as it is also of a sort of degenerate and Judaizing Christians) now it is plain that this State of Religion must needs be very uncomfortable also; because a Man must of necessity drag on very heavily where his reason doth not go before him, and his Judgment is not convinced of the Goodness and Excellency of those Observances, as well as of the Necessity of them.

Lastly, If a Man was under a Religion which could give him no assurance of any reward of his Devotion; but that for ought he knew he might at last have only his Labour for his Pain: Forasmuch as there was no way to assure him whether it should be his portion to rot for ever in the Grave, or whether after Death he should be transformed into some other Creature; or that though the Name and Memory of his good Actions should remain, yet his particular Person was to be swallowed up into the Womb of general Nature, and he for ever lost (such as which were the utmost hopes of the generality of the Blind Pagans.)

Now, I say, such Principles of Religion as this, or any of the forementioned, must needs be very uncomfortable; but all these, *Biophilus*, are as manifestly false, as they are sadly melancholy, and therefore it is not any defect in Religion that the Spirits of Men are uncomfortable, but the default of those bad notions they have taken up, instead of the true Principles of Religion. And so much for that second sort of Men.

Bioph. I am wonderfully pleased with this last Discourse of yours, in which you have not more demonstrated the uncomfortableness, than exposed the nonsense and absurdity of a great number of Religionists; and therefore so far I thank you. But then again, I must tell you, upon due consideration, it makes as much against your self as any of them, so far as concerns the point in hand between us. For after all that can be said, it is undeniable, that some Men of very different persuasions, are as cheerful in their several and respective ways, one as the other: now forasmuch as these cannot all be true, in regard they contradict each other; doth it not therefore follow from hence, that the comfortableness of Mens Spirits doth not depend merely upon Religion, but upon something else?

Sebast. In truth you follow me very close, yet I have two or three things to say, which I do not doubt will acquit me in what I have said, and I hope may satisfy you. First, it is to be considered, that a Man may be found in his Principles

The Causes of the Comfortableness of some mistaken Religions;

ples of Religion, and right for the main, who yet may differ from other Men, and perhaps from the truth too, so much as to make him be reputed of a different Religion; yet notwithstanding those great Principles which he is found in, and that honest Zeal he shews in the prosecution of them, will procure him acceptance with God, and enable him to live very comfortably; for fervent Devotion will cover a multitude of Errours, as well *as charity doth a multitude of sins*. And this is to be hoped is the condition of a great many well-meaning, but deluded People.

Again, Secondly, It is observable in this case, that many warm themselves *by sparks of their own kindling*, and are heated more by their own Motion, than by the Grounds and Causes of it: Zeal naturally warms the Blood, and whatsoever warms, in some measure comforts too; insomuch that some Men of very rascally Opinions, and such as in the consequences of them, tend towards Hell, are yet raised up towards Heaven by the power of an Active and heated Fancy.

But, after all, you must remember (what I said before) that Truth is Truth, and Dream is Dream; my meaning is, the Man of a mighty Zeal in his way, may seem to himself happy (whatever his Principles be) but it is only the Man of sound Principles of Religion, that can be truly and understandingly and constantly comfortable.

And now I suppose I may come to the Third and last sort of Men which disparage Religion (just as an unruly Patient discredits his Physi-

*A wicked Life
cannot be comfort-
able, if a Man's
Religion be never
so good.*

cian) namely, those who tho' they have right notions of Religion, yet live carelessly, and are by no means answerable to their Principles in the conduct of their Lives.

Now it can be no wonder, nor any slander to Religion, that such Men who live wickedly should be uncomfortable in their Spirits. For we may as well expect, this cold Weather, to warm our selves by a Gloe-worm, or a painted-Fire, as that any Man's Heart should be truly chearful by the advantage of a Religion which consisted only in Notion, and was not vigorously practised. Nay, it would be a wonder indeed if such a Man should not be sadly melancholy, lying continually under the lashes of his own Conscience, for contradicting the very Principles of his own Mind. And this is so far from reflecting any dishonour upon Religion, that it is a mighty Vindication of the truth and power of it, when a Man's own Heart shall revenge upon him his contempt of her Dictates and Sentiments; and certainly the better and more generous a Man's Principles are (which he in this manner violates by a lewd Life) so much more sharp will be the stings of Conscience, and the uneasiness of his Condition.

But now, take a Man who to right Principles in his mind joyns a conformable Holy Life, and (as there is all the reason in the World for it, so) it is a thousand to one in experience, but he lives comfortably. And thus I think I have fully acquitted my self of your prime Objection

tion against the Comfortableness of Religion.

Bioph. I confess, *Sebastian*, you have spoke a great deal of reason, but yet perhaps you are not so clearly come off as you may imagine: for I have itill to object, that many Men of your Principles, and who (as it seems) in consequence of them, carry it sometimes with full sail of joy and courage, yet at other times are not able to maintain this tide, but flag, and are as much down by fits as other Men; nay, do you not observe that there are Men in the World, whose Principles I know you will allow, and withal whose lives you cannot blame, and yet these very Men shall be remarkably uncomfortable, and no Men fuller of complaints and more uneasie than they. Therefore it seems Religion is neither such a stable Principle of Comfort, nor such a *Panacea*, such a general remedy of the Troubles of Humane Life, as is pretended: if you can reconcile this with your former Assertions, I think I shall then be forced to yield you the Cause.

Sebast. It is true which you observe, That sometimes those that seem to have all the advantages of Religion, are notwithstanding uncomfortable under them, and yet this may be no impeachment either of the Truth, or of the efficacy of those Principles. For this which you speak of may come to pass upon several other accounts, as, namely;

How it may happen that pious Men may be uncomfortable.

In the first place, it may be that he, in whose whole course of Life we can observe no blemish, may notwithstanding be justly charged by his own

own Conscience for several such miscarriages as may well make him uneasie till he hath made his Peace with God and himself again, by hearty Repentance and Reformation. Now you must not impute this to the defect of Consolation in the Principles of Religion, but to the Man's own defect of Piety. For whensoever we see a Man troubled for violating the Rules of his Religion, we have a kind of sensible experiment of the great reality and mighty power of it; and this may happen, though you see not the causes of it.

Again, It may be the Person who now lives very vertuously, and consequently might live comfortably upon the Principles of Religion, hath formerly been a great sinner: and now, though his Repentance hath made his Peace with God, and so there is nothing justly to interrupt his Comfort; yet as often as he reflects upon the hainousness of his former miscarriages, no wonder if the briskness of his Spirit be abated, if it be but by the Consideration of the Danger he hath escaped.

Again, It may happen that he who is not indeed conscious to himself of any guilt which should deject his confidence towards God, yet by the malicious artifice of the great Enemy of Mankind, may have such black and frightful fancies raised in his head, as may very much discompose him for the present, till by Prayer and Application to the Grace of God he overcomes them.

Moreover sometimes, when all is well within, and a Man's own Heart doth not accuse him, yet it may happen that outward afflictions may
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be so vexatious, so sharp and pinching to him, that for a time even a good Man's Spirits may be disordered by them; till he recollect himself, and Sampson like, *shake off those Philistims that are upon him*; I mean until he rally the forces of his Reason, or rather till by Faith he take Sanctuary in the impregnable Fortrefs of Conscience and Religion, and there he securely weathers out the storm, and all becomes quickly serene and calm again.

But after all that is or can be said, allowance must still be made for an unhappy temper of Body: for it must be remembered that Religion is a Medicine for the Soul or Mind, and not for Bodily Diseases. You know the intimate correspondence and quick sympathy between those two Inmates, Soul and Body, which is such, that like *Hypocrates's* Twins, they mutually affect one another, so that one of them cannot well enjoy it self, if the other be in disorder. Do but consider how exceeding difficult it is to maintain the rate of a Man's common conversation, and especially to bear up to any measure of brisk airyness, when the Body is but a little sickly and discomposed. And then how can you imagine but that there will be an unevenness of temper in a melancholy Man's deportment, notwithstanding that the comforts of Religion should be as solid and stable as I have represented them to be.

Bioph. But by your leave, Sir, I understood you that there were such a Catholick and Paramount Antidote of all Sorrow to be found in Religion, that your pious Man could never have been sad any more (like the Chimæra of a wise Man

Man amongst the Stoicks) neither outward Accidents could discompose him, nor bodily Infirmities interrupt his tranquility and self enjoyments.

Sebast. Sure, *Biophilus*, you did not think I took every good Man to become a God Almighty, or the powers of Religion to be so omnipotent, as that because they can recreate a Man's Spi-

The unhappy influence of a melancholy Body upon the Mind.

rits, they should therefore also make him entirely another Creature. You might as well imagine I asserted that this spiritual remedy should preserve Men from dying, as from being sick or melancholy, when their Constitution is prone to it. For although by reason of the near relation between Soul and Body (as I said before) it is not to be doubted, but that the comforts of the Mind upon account of Religion, may, in a good measure, cheer the bodily Spirits, yet on the other side, it is to be expected that the Body will have its influence reciprocally; and when it is infirm, will depress and clog the Mind that it shall be sure to be sensible of the burthen, and be able to move the less briskly in its course. In short, the business between the Soul and Body stands thus; namely, as, on the one hand, the Body can affect the Mind so far as to retard its motion, and check its flight; but not so as altogether to oppose and hinder them: so, on the other hand, the Mind (if that be comfortable) comforts and refreshes the bodily Spirits, but is not able entirely to alter them: For Temper will be Temper, and Melancholy will be Melancholy still.

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That therefore which I assert and have hitherto endeavoured to prove, and that which the common experience of pious Men attests, is no more but this, That there are never-failing Springs of Consolation in Religion, provided the issues of them be not obstructed by some or other of the aforesaid occasions.

Phil. I know, *Sebastian*, you have well considered all that which you have said, and I thank God I have some experience of the truth of it for the most part; and therefore have reason to rely upon your Judgment for the rest. But yet there is one thing runs in my thoughts, concerning which I would gladly ask your Opinion, if I do not unseasonably interrupt your discourse with *Biophilus*.

Sebast. You will not interrupt me, *Philander*, for I was at a full period; or if it was otherwise, we would make a Parenthesis for your satisfaction: What is it therefore wherein I can serve you.

Phil. The matter, in short then, is this: I have observed several Divines, amongst the causes of perplexity and uncomfortableness of good Men, to reckon one, of which you have hitherto taken no notice; namely, *the case of Desertion*, which they define to be, "When

*The unreasonable-
ness of a commonly
received Opinion
concerning God's
deserting of good
Men.*

"God withdraws himself arbitrarily from such Persons for a time, and hides his Face from them upon the sole account of his Prerogative, or for some reason best known to himself, but without the least guilt or provocation on their parts. Now if this

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be true, it may then not only happen that the very best, and also the most sanguine and chearful Men naturally may be very uncomfortable; but the very state of Spiritual comfort will be very uncertain and fluctuating; and, which is worst of all, there will be a Disease without a Remedy, a case that admits of no Consolation. For what can all Counsels and Discourses, or all the Exercises of Faith or Reason avail against a peremptory Act of God.

Sebast. It is very true, *Philander*, as you observe, there hath been such a notion broached, and the effects and consequences have been bad enough; For besides what you have well alliedg-

The absurd consequences of that Opinion.

ed, under the pretence hereof, some have been so abused as to indulge their own humour, and as *Jonas* said, *he did well to be angry*, so they fancies, they ought to be melancholy, when God (as they imagine) sets himself against them, and they thereby are tempted to think hardly of the Divine Majesty, as if he was a great Tyrant who took pleasure in the complaints of his Creatures; and which is worse than that (if worse can be) sometimes evil Men get this Notion by the end, and then whensoever their wicked lives render their Consciences uneasy to them, they presently conceit it may be only the withdrawing of the Divine Favour from them, and how can they help it, since it is the case of good Men to be so dealt with?

The groundlessness of the aforesaid Opinion.

But what ground there is for all this I cannot imagine. It is true, we ought not to dispute

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pute the Divine Prerogative, or what he may do if he pleases. For we find it dangerous to take upon us to limit the Prerogative of earthly Princes; and if they may have reasons for such things as we do not understand, much more hath God, whose wisdom is infinite and unsearchable: therefore not to define what God may or may not do, it is plain that there is no foundation in holy Scripture (which is the Declaration of his Will) to think he will take such a course as this case supposes; and besides, it seems inconsistent with his Sincerity and Goodness, and can by no means be reconciled with that settled and immoveable delight he declares himself to take in good Men, that he should play fast and loose with them, or (as some have rudely express'd it) play at bo-peep with his Children.

No, *Philander*, assure your self, infinite Goodness will not disguise it self, and put on a frightful Vizard merely to scare his weak and timorous Children; so far from it, that contrariwise so long as Men continue Constant, Loyal and Dutiful towards him, he will be unchangeable in his favour, and constantly shine out upon them in the bright beams of love and kindness. And if it shall happen that (as I granted to *Biophilus*) the melancholy of Men's Constitution shall rise up in such black fumes, as not only to cloud their Minds, but that (consequently thereof) they may entertain dismal Apprehensions of him; yet against all this he is ready to relieve them by his Providence, and to assist and comfort them by his holy Spirit, if he be devoutly applied to: but to be sure he will never exasperate the condition of a sincerely good Man
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by any unprovoked act of his own. He hath told us, *He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench smoking flax*, Matth. 12. 20. And that, *if Men draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to them*, James 4. 8. and he neither needs it, nor is inclined to try experiments upon poor melancholy Men. Let us have a care therefore of charging the effects of our own changeable humour (either of Body or Mind) upon the unchangeable God. For so long as we walk by the Light of his Word, we may live under the Light of his Countenance, it (at least) our own melancholy interpose not, and eclipse it to us: and (bating outward troubles) we may upon those terms, in a good measure enjoy Heaven upon Earth; we may be as bold as Lyons, as chearful as Angels; in a word, as full of joy as our Hearts can hold: For the Principles of Religion will beat all this out, and God will never interrupt the efficacy of them.

Phil. Oh Blessed! For ever blessed be the Divine Goodness, and God's Blessing on your Heart, *Sebastian*, for the good report and assurance you have given us of it. And now, Friends,

*An Holy Triumph
in Contemplation of
the comfort of true
Religion.*

why should not we be very good, that we may be thus comfortable? And why should we not be comfortable if we be good? Why should the Jelly Fellows out-do us, whose Hearts are filled with Froth, and their Heads with Steam, and we that (if we be as we pretend to be) have God, and Conscience, and Heaven on our sides, hang down our Heads and Hands, and by so doing reproach our God, our Religion, and our selves too?

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Have not we such Notions of a God, as render him a just and a *faithful Creator*, a wise and benign Being, that is tender of and exorable towards his Creatures: How then can we chuse but love him, and delight in him?

Hath not his Divine Majesty made his Mind so well known to us, that we cannot be to seek what will please him, but may go on chearfully in the course of our Duty without Distrust or Scruple? And can we doubt his constancy to himself, and to that Declaration he hath made of his Will, that we should suspect the end if we use the means; since we may read our own destiny before hand, and anticipate the Sentence of the great Day of Judgment? Are not all his Laws so just and rational, that they agree with the very sense of our own Mind, so that *his Service is perfect Freedom*? Forasmuch as in a very proper sense we are governed by our own Laws, those of the Gospel being enacted in our own Consciences.

And are we not satisfied that we shall be so far from losing our labour in Religion, that we have the fullest assurance (such a thing is capable of) that in reward of faithful serving God in this Life, we shall after Death be raised up again, and live for ever and ever with him in his Kingdom of Heaven? Surely all this together is sufficient to make us fervent and hearty in the exercise of Religion, and comfortable in our Spirits when we have so done.

Sebast. Bravely resolved, *Philander*, this pace (if you hold it) will bring you to *Urania* presently. But I will bear you company if I can, and therefore I add to what you have said, why
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should we be afraid to be alone, or in the dark, since we believe God is every-where, and in the greatest solitude will afford us the comfortable effects of his Presence and Providence? Or why should we be under dreadful Apprehensions of the power and malicious enterprizes of evil Spirits upon us, seeing we are convinced *that greater is he that is with us, than he that is in the World?*

Why should we be dejected at worldly losses, or miscarriages in our temporal affairs, when we know that *in Heaven we have a more enduring Substance?*

Why should we be dismay'd at the infliction of any Pain or Torture upon our Bodies, either by the Hand of God in a violent disease, or by the cruelty of Men that hate and persecute us: since God hath promised *that no temptation shall overtake us, but what we shall be able to bear?* That is, he both can, and will either abate the Torments, or support us under them.

In a word, what need we be afraid of death it self, since *it cannot kill the Soul*, and is no more but only a dark passage to a Kingdom of Light and Glory-----

Bioph. You talk bravely, Gentlemen, but I protest I am amazed at you, for to this very day I never looked upon Religion as any other than an austere and melancholy course of Life, and the most undesirable thing in the whole World.

Phil. For God's sake then, *Biophilus*, what is comfortable if Religion be melancholy? Is the World so very comfortable, when you know it is full of nothing but care and folly, vexation and disappointment? Is Sin so comfortable, which (after the Commission of it) perpetually
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dogs a Man with guilt, and ordinarily blemishes his Credit, disorders his Fortunes, impairs his Health, and crows and debases his Spirit? Or is Death so comfortable a thing, which represents to a Man nothing but an horrible pit of Darknes and the Land of Oblivion.

If Religion be not comfortable nothing is, and Mankind is a sad and deplorable Creature.

What (I say) then can be comfortable, if that be not so, which is the only remedy against all the former? For it is plain, that nothing but the Hopes of another and better World at last can enable a Man to enjoy himself tolerably in this present: Nothing but living vertuously for the time to come can repair the mischief of sins formerly committed; and nothing but Eternal Life is a sufficient antidote against the Fears of Death: and all these are the effects and benefits of Religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, Mankind must needs be the most deplorably unhappy kind of Being in the whole World. For though other Creatures are in some sort fellow-sufferers in the common Calamity of this World; yet besides that their share is ordinarily not so great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing for the future, but only feel the present evil, and they have no restraint upon them from what they desire, nor no remorse for what they have done; therefore if Mankind have not the glory of his Conscience when he doth well, to set against the checks and girds of it when he doth amiss; and if he have not hopes to counter-balance his fears, and a reward hereafter for his self-denial at present, his condition is far the worst of any Creature in the World.

Therefore, as I said, Religion is his peculiar concern, and singular advantage, as that which only can repair all his misfortunes.

Sebast. But I pray, *Biophilus*, what do you apprehend in Religion that can make it look so melancholy to you? *Is it because* it sets a God before you, than which nothing can be more desirable? For *God is love*, is *rich in goodness*, nay goodness it self; infomuch, that if it were possible any thing in the Universe should be more good than he, that would be God. He made Man, preserves him, loves him, delights in him, designs him to live eternally with himself. In a word, all imaginable comfort is so wrapp'd up in this one word, *God*, that I remember a

brave Heathen said, *He would*

M. Atoninus. *not be willing to live a day in the World, if he thought there*

was not a God in it.

It may be, you will say, this God is Just and Holy, and Jealous of his Honour, and will revenge himself upon stubborn and incorrigible

*The great truths of Religion vindicated from the imputation of uncomfor-
tability.*

Sinners; all this is true, but what need you be one of those that provoke him; and then, the Juster and Holier he is, the Better and more Comfortable it is for you; or if you have offended him heretofore, yet if you repent and turn to him, he is so exorable and pitiful, that no tender Parent hath more yearning Bowels, or more open Arms, to receive his prodigal and lost Son returning home to him, than God hath towards penitent Sinners.

Will you object the self-denials required by Religion, as that a Man must restrain himself for God's sake of many things that are pleasant to Flesh and Blood? It is true there are such things required, but they are not so many as that a Man may not live very pleasantly notwithstanding; and if they were more than they are, who would not comply with them to obtain the Favour of such a God, and to gain Eternal Life upon those terms?

I am sure you cannot object against the direct and positive Duties of Religion, such as Prayers and Praises to God, Reading and Meditating on his Word, or Acts of Beneficence and Charity towards Mankind; for there is nothing more pleasant and entertaining, nothing more delicious than these, if they be rightly understood. So that in short, it is no better than a mere slander to call Religion uncomfortable, and such as could proceed from nothing but the Devil himself; or if from Men, it must be such as had never tried it, nor were resolved ever to do so.

Bioph. You must pardon me, Gentlemen, I tell you plainly I never felt any of these Comforts of Religion which you speak of.

Phil. I, there's the business, now you have said all, here lies the bottom of all the scandalous reports of Religion, as if it was a sower, melancholy thing. Try it, *Biophilus*, and you will quickly confute your self, experience will do it for you: you used to say, Seeing is believing; now, in God's Name make experiment, *Taste and see how good the Lord is*; and let me tell you this for your encouragement, there were never yet any who effectually made the experi-

ment and were disappointed. A great many who slighted Religion for a great while, at last have become sensible of their folly, and made their refuge in it; but it is very rare, and next to impossible, to find any who in earnest applied themselves to it, that ever apostatized from it, or pretended they were disappointed of Comfort in it.

Bioph. But, for God's sake, what do you mean by trying? What would you have me do? I should be very glad to live comfortably.

Phil. By trying, we mean no more but this:
The true method of experimenting the comforts of Religion.

You must apply your self in earnest to the knowledge and practice of Religion, the very first step to which is gravity and seriousness of Spirit. It was, I remember, the short and weighty Counsel of the great *Hugo Grotius*, when he lay on his Death-bed, to some about him, who asked his advice; *Be serious*, said he, and your work is half-done: leave off tricks of wit and captious Evasions; do not please your self in a trifling pretence to extraordinary sagacity in finding flaws in so weighty a concern as this we speak of; but be willing to believe, and then (as I said) resolve to live up to the Convictions of your Conscience, and you will, in due time, find the comfort of so doing.

You do not expect to feel the warmth of the Fire, this cold Season, unless you draw near to it, and continue by it; no more reasonably can you expect to feel the Comforts of Religion, till you have embraced the Doctrines, and at least begun to live by the Laws of it; but when

you

you have so done, from thenceforth you will begin to be sensible of what we have discoursed, and according to your progress, such will be the proportion of your comfort, and persevering in your course you will every day find your self drawing nearer and nearer to Heaven; is it not so, *Sabaſtian*?

Sebaſt. True to a tittle, *Philander*, and so you, *Biophilus*, will find it, if you (as I hope you will) make the experiment; for though (as our good Friend here hath well observed) the joys of Religion come in gradually, and not all at once; yet, like the rising Sun, they are always growing higher and higher to a perfect Day of Glory, and (therein unlike to that) never more setting or shutting in upon us in a total darkness again; as soon as you set your Face towards Heaven, and begin to live conscientiously you shall find your Mind easie, and your Spirits cheared with an admirable serenity; and when in consequence of such beginning, you worship God devoutly, you will find a comfort in his Presence, and a sweet sense of him when you have finished your Duty; thence you will proceed to feel a motion of bravery in your Mind to resist all kind of Sin, and that will be followed with an unspeakable Pleasure and Glory in Victory over your Passions and corrupt Inclinations, and thence-forward Religion will grow easie and delightful to you, and you shall be able to look towards the other World with hope and desire; and then finally the holy Spirit will come into your Soul, and *seal you to the day of Redemption*, and give you such a relish of the Glories above, that you shall despise the present

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World,

World, and be able to look through the dark Vault of Death, and take a view of Heaven.

Bioph. Whatever the matter is, you two are able to ravish any Man's Heart with this Discourse, I am sure you have filled me with admiration, you have astonished me. But I pray what Religion must a Man be of, that he may make this experiment?

Sebast. Nay, sure enough it must be *the Old Religion*, or you will lose your labour. All New-fangles are mere cheats; they may serve Men to talk of, and make a

The Old Religion is the only comfortable Religion.

noise with in the World, but they will never afford sound comfort in a Man's need: so far from it, that they distract a Man with Novelty, and fill his Head with endless scrupulosity. The way to Peace of Conscience, and Spiritual Joy, is not to be of such an Opinion, Sect, or Party, or to be zealous of such a Mode or Ceremony; but to have a firm Faith in God, to live an holy and devout Life, this is the Old Religion truly so called, for it is as Old as Gospel it self, and consequently is the tried way to solid Consolation, But I pray, upon this occasion, give me leave to ask you a bold Question, What Religion are you of at present?

Bioph. It is a free Question, I confess; but, (knowing whom I am amongst) I will give you as free an Answer: truly, *Sebastian*, I am of no Religion at all that I know of, unless you make me to be of one.

Phil. Then I do not wonder that you are such a Stranger to the comforts of Religion, for it seems all was Romance to you (as you call'd it)

it) but I hope, however, you do not look upon it as a modish Qualification, and a piece of Gallantry to be without Religion; take heed of that, good *Biophilus*, for *God will not be mocked*.

Bioph. You see I do not, *Philander*; but I know on the other side, you would not have me dissemble, and play the Hypocrite neither; and therefore I have told you the very truth.

Phil. You do very well in both those particulars, but it's pity you should not find out a middle between Scepticism and Hypocrisie, which you have now a fair opportunity to do, being in the company of *Sebastian*, if you please to make use of it.

Sebast. In earnest, *Biophilus*, you are one of the strangest Men in the World, if this be true which you say of your self; I pray give me leave to enquire how you came to be in this condition? I am confident you have not drown-

*Several occasions
of Mens being irre-
ligious.*

ed your Religion in drink, (as some have done) for I take you to be a wiser Man, and more careful of your Life and Health; and I am as confident that you have not carelessly lost it in your Travels in Foreign Countries, as some young Gentlemen have done. What then! Hath the Hypocrisie of some high Pretenders (who either ridiculously over-acting their parts, or lewdly prostituting Religion to base and villainous designs) made you ashamed of it, or (which hath been very common in this Age) have you run a wild round through all Opinions, till at last, being come about to the very Point you set out from, you thenceforth concluded
with

with your self according to the Proverb, *As good never a whit as never the better!*

Bioph. You are very ingenious in your guesses, *Sebastian*, but all in vain; for you can never find what was never lost, nor can I have lost what I never had. I tell you again, I neither have, nor ever had any Religion that I know of.

Phil. You might well have spared those last words, *Biophilus*; for I will undertake for you, you have no Religion indeed, if you do *not know of it*. Religion is not like a Disease, to be catch'd before we are aware, nor can it be imposed upon us without our consent and privity: Besides, it is so active and vigorous a Principle, that it will discover it self, and a Man may as well carry Fire in his Bosom and not be burnt, as carry Religion in his Heart and not be sensible of it.

Sebast. You mightily increase my wonder; I am at a loss how this could come to pass: did you grow, like a Mushroom, out of the Earth? Or what was the manner of your Education?

Bioph. My Birth, *Sebastian*,
III Education. was, I suppose, like other Mens, but perhaps my Breeding might have something peculiar in it. For amongst other things that happened to me, it fell out that one of those Persons who should especially have taken care of my Institution, being a great Fanatick, was strongly of the Opinion, that the Spirit of God (as his Phrase was) must immediately and by himself, effect all the good that is in any Man; and therefore he concluded it would not only be lost labour, but a Derogation from the Grace of God, to make use

use of any means, or to be much concerned about my Education. And then, for the rest of them to whom I was committed in my minority, they were great Politicians, and pretended they should consult my Interest most by keeping me dis-engaged from any Party in Religion, that so I might be always at liberty to joyn my self with that which should prove most to my temporal advantage.

Phil. Shrewdly projected on both parts, in-
somuch that it is hard to say whether the Divi-
nity of the former, or the Politicks of the lat-
ter be the more wonderful.

Sebast. Here was a beginning bad enough, I
confess, but then when you grew a Man, and
became at your own dispose, what kept you
unresolv'd in this great Affair?

Bioph. For that, I must tell you, that my
setting out in the World fell about the late times
of publick Distraction, and then I observed
there were so many Religions, that it was not
easie to resolve which to chuse, and upon that
account I continued neuter still.

Sebast. Nay, *Biophilus*, there you were want-
ing to your self, as much as your Guardians had
been wanting to you before; for the more Dis-
putes concerning Religion there are in the
World, it is far the greater probability that
there is at least some general truth amongst
them, though many of the particulars must needs
be mistaken: besides, if you had considered
that matter diligently, you would have found,
that few or none of those disputes were about
the Fundamentals of Religion, but only about
certain Notions, or Modes and Forms; and you
might

might have abstracted from them, and been a good Christian nevertheless.

Bioph. It may be so, and, I confess, I had sometimes such thoughts; but then whenever I began to look that way, there were those brisk young Men about me, that, observing me to

Ill Company betray Men to Atheism.

grow a little serious, would preach to me at this rate; What, *Biophilus*, do you grow weary of your Liberty? Do you not know there are bonds in Religion, as well as in Matrimony? Are you not aware how it restrains the Pleasures of Life, and damps all jollity? If once you let loose that thing call'd Conscience, it will cost you a great deal of Art and Pains to hamper it again, and subdue it to your interests. Do but observe (say they) that whensoever any Man comes under the power of Religion, it abates his Courage and Bravery, and renders him tame and sheepish, liable to be affronted by every body. In a word, said they, all that which they call the fear of God, and concern for another World, is nothing but either the effect of Ignorance, Pedantry, or Hypocrisie; but to make our selves merry with both, is true Wit and Gallantry.

Phil. Lord! what pity it is that such Men, as you speak of, were not condemned to wear Fools Coats, or that they have not some mark set upon them, that Men might avoid them as Lepers, or Men infected with some such loathsome and contagious Disease. I pray, Sir, what Opinion had you of that sort of Men and the preachments they made?

Bioph.

Bioph. To tell you the truth, I had not much better conceit of them my self, than you have; for though they pretend to Wit, yet it is little more than Impudence and Scurrility; and besides that, they are rude towards the most general persuasion of Mankind; I observe withal, that the greatest talkers, at that rate, are commonly Men that not only prostitute their Reputation, but squander away their Estate, their Health and Lives also with such incogitancy and prodigious folly, that I can by no means think their Judgment is to be relied upon in any serious matter; yet I must needs say something stuck with me by the frequent Harangues and Conversation of such Men.

*The rudeness
and barbarity of
Atheists.*

Phil. I am in great hopes of you, *Biophilus*, that you will come over to us, now you betray the secrets of Atheism. You have revealed the very *Mystery of Iniquity*; 'tis liberty to be lewd and wicked, and perfect licentiousness that is the secret root and cause of Atheism, and Men of a profligate sense and debauched tempers, are the principal Advocates for it, and the sworn Enemies to Religion, as indeed they are to every thing that is serious.

Sebast. *Biophilus* speaks like a Man of sense and ingenuity, and give me leave to say, Sir, I cannot tell whether I ought more to applaud the sagacity of your Mind, or to deplore the unhappiness of your Education and Acquaintance; it is a thousand pities the former should lie under the fatal prejudices of the latter. And I should account nothing to have befallen me in my whole Life more lucky or desirable, than an opportunity

nity of rescuing such a temper from such a calamity. But, I pray, with the same ingenuity you have hitherto express'd, tell me, have you gone away currantly with this incuriousness or unconcernedness for Religion? Have you not sometimes had conflicts within your self upon the point we are upon?

*The irreligious
Man's conflict with
himself.*

Bioph. I confess I have; for sometimes, whereas I could not but observe this business of Religion to be the great Theme of the World, I mean to be that which the generality of Mankind are very busie and solicitous about (for I can call to mind but very few who have not in some sort or other pretended to it) and I take notice also, that most of the sharpest disputes and hottest contests are raised about it; surely then (thought I) these Men are in earnest, and believe themselves in this affair, and then why should I make the adventure alone? it may become me in prudence to have some concern about it too; especially when I considered and saw plainly that by the course of all the World I must shortly die; and so much as it was impossible for me to be certain what might or might not come afterwards, and what strange Revolutions might succeed my going off the Stage of this World, within the compass of that vast tract of time which I was likely to leave behind me. Hereupon methought it became me in discretion to provide for the worst. To all which I must add, That I have at several times had unaccountable qualms and mis-givings of Heart (upon some of the foregoing Considerations, or something of that nature)

ture) which not a little startled me for the present; but then I endeavoured to check them as the effects of Melancholy and mere Panick Fears; notwithstanding, in spite of my Heart, they would return upon me, and gave me suspicion that they might have some other ground than I was aware of.

Sebast. Well, and would not these things prevail upon you to lay aside your neutrality, and determine you to a serious Consideration of Religion?

Bioph. No truly, they did not, for I had other thoughts came into my Mind, which seemed to counter balance the former, and brought me to an *equilibrium*, or to hang in such a suspense as you now find me in; for I suspected my suspicions, and fell in doubt whether those odd kind of bodings and presages of my own Mind, which I told you of, concerning God and a future State, might not proceed from the mere weakness and timidity of Humane Nature, or from Ignorance, Melancholy, or natural Superstition, without any just and reasonable Foundation. And then as for those Apprehensions of Religion, which I observed to be generally in other Men, I therein suspected the Arts of cunning Men and State-Politicians, who might possibly have designs to over-reach others into those Persuasions which they had no sense of themselves. Upon such Considerations as these, I was inclined on the other side, not to give my self any trouble about that which seemed so dark and uncertain.

Sebast

Devotion towards God is neither the effect of Ignorance, Cowardice, Superstition, &c. but hath real and rational grounds.

Sebast. I pity you with all my Heart, *Biophilus*, and yet my wonder is almost equal to my pity, that a Man of your sagacity should be staggered by such groundless Fancies; and withal, I cannot but hope that your second thoughts will easily assail you in this case. For in the first place, you cannot but have observed that many of the shrewdest Men in the World, are as much under an awful sense of Religion, as the most easie and injudicious. Nay, ordinarily, the more thoroughly learned and wise any Men are, the more hearty and earnest they are in this affair. From whence you cannot (without doing violence to your discretion) but conclude, that Religion and Devotion are far from being the mere effects of ignorance and imposture; whatever some shatter-brain'd and debauch'd Persons would fain persuade themselves and others.

And then in the second place, when you consider that the most brave and courageous do as well take sanctuary in Religion, and imbrace it as ardently as the most timorous and cowardly; you will have no more reason to impute the rise of Piety to pusillanimity or superstitious fears, than you had before to charge it upon folly and ignorance, or the cheats of Politicians, but must be forced to conclude this great business to be more deeply founded, and to depend upon higher Causes.

Bioph. You say well, Sir, and I should be apt to think so too, if I could learn what those higher Causes and deep Foundations are, which
you

you speak of; and herein I would gladly have your advice, who (as I am persuaded) have too great a judgment to be led away with popular errors, and (I am confident) whose integrity is such as will not suffer you to be accessary to the imposing upon me. Tell me therefore, I beseech you, into what real Causes I ought to resolve, either those private Impressions of Religion I have found in my self, or those more publick Effects of it, which I have observed in others.

Schast. Play the Man, *Biophilus*, and judge with your self, into what Causes should you, or can you resolve such Effects, but those that are as real and substantial as the Effects themselves; namely, the plain reasonableness of that thing (called Religion) approving it self both to the inward sense of your own Mind, and to humane nature in general; that is to say, there is first a natural impress of Religion, which God hath left upon the Consciences of Men, which is, as it were, the internal sense of the Soul: and then when the reason reflects also upon this business, humane judgment prudentially weighing and estimating the reasons for it, and the objections against it, together with the moment and importance of the thing, pronounces it upon due Consideration, to be the prime and most necessary concern of Mankind.

Bioph. But if you will make me your Disciple, I must intreat you to deal more expressly, and particularly with me, and to open to the very bottom, the Foundations of the thing in Question. And let me beg your pardon, if I tell you that you are observed to be a Man of
E such

such Eloquence, that you are able to wheedle a Man into your Opinion, be it what it can. But I pray deal plainly and rationally with me, seeing that otherwise if I should become your Convert, you will have but little Credit by me, since, in that case, my zeal would be without knowledge, and my heat without light; and, besides (to wiser Men) you will but seem to beg the Question, and artificially to persuade to that which you cannot prove. Therefore (as I intimated before) pray make me to understand, that Religion is as reasonable in it self, and in its Principles, as you have represented it to be important in the consequences of it.

Schaft. I understand you, but I have gone more than half way in that already; for having shewed you the consequence of Religion to be such, as that a Man can neither live nor die comfortably without it, there is therefore all the reason in the World for it. For he that proves a thing to be necessary, does more than prove it to be real.

Bioph. That was a false blow, which I did not expect, I confess.

Schaft. But it is an home thrust to the business, it doth *jugulum petere* (as they say) for it

Prudence and self-love oblige a Man to be religious.

obliges you as you are a Man, and pretend either to prudence or self-love, to apply your self seriously to this affair; nay, if there should be wanting such other proofs as you require, you cannot reasonably insist upon that, for you will acknowledge that self-preservation is the first and surest principle in Nature; and sure that is good proof, which proves

proves that Man to be worse than a Fool who doth not follow it.

Bioph. That is home indeed: But let me tell you, it is one of my greatest prejudices against Religion, that the most zealous Defenders of it talk of probable Arguments, and prudential Considerations, &c. Now, for my part, I require natural and direct proofs, and nothing less will satisfy me.

Sebast. And, good *Biophilus*, had you not such given you in our last Conference, and that in the very point which you chose to join issue upon?

Bioph. I must confess in that one point, *of a judgment to come*, you argued so shrewdly, that something of it sticks by me still, but it may be it was because I granted some things then for Civility sake, which I will not be held to now; besides, if you should make out some single point, and not the rest, I shall be never the nearer: for it will but make a Dispute and Confusion in my Mind, and will come to no Issue: Forasmuch as if all those things that are necessary to the Being, and to the Obligation of Religion, be not resolved of, there can be no such thing as it. I desire therefore now to see your whole *Hypothesis* laid together, and all the grounds of it substantially made out.

Sebast. Why, that is done to my hand, and yours too, *Biophilus*, and you may save me the labour, if you please, by consulting the incomparable *Hugo Grotius*, Bishop *Wilkins*, or several other excellent Persons (whom I need not name) who have performed this with exquisite Learning and Judgment. And if you have not

the Books by you, I will furnish you with any of them.

Bioph. I thank you for the kind offer; but with your leave, I will stick to my first Request, that we may discuss this matter between our selves; both because in this way of Conference you can explain your self to me more fully, if I should not reach your meaning at

first: and besides, I do not love that other Men should make my Answers or Objections for me, but had rather make them my self, (as best knowing where the Shoe pinches.)

Sebast. If you will have it so, I am content to be at your service to the uttermost of my Power; but let me tell you by the way, that tho' I take offence at nothing, yet I a little wonder'd at the caution you put in (even now) against Eloquence; What did you mean, *Biophilus*? What was you afraid of? For my part, I can pretend to no other Skill, than to render those things plain and easie, that were before true and reasonable, or at most to be able to deliver hard Arguments in soft words. Now, is an Argument ever the stronger for being crabbed and rough? Or the weaker, or less effectual, for being smooth and oily? Is it such a pleasure to be non-pluss'd in Mood and Figure, that you had rather be snap'd in the Mouse-trap of a Sologism, than treated Socratically and gently? I promise you, I will use no Legerdemain, no Slight of Hand with you; or if I should go about it, you are too sagacious to be imposed upon by me. If you have a phancy for scholastick

Gibberish.

Gibberish, and love to be cramp'd with an *Ergo*, I am not altogether to seek in that way neither: but if you give me leave, I would rather chuse that way of discoursing which we have held hitherto, as that which is least apt to raise any heat or passion, and which will the most plainly and naturally represent the truth of things to you.

Bioph. Nay, marry, in such a case as this, I have as little phancy for chopping of Logick, as for the long wheedles of Rhetorick; I require only (as I said) substantial proofs; and so your Arguments be strong, I care not how soft and filken the Lines be. Go on therefore in your own way, *in God's name*.

Sebast. I, that was well thought of indeed; for without *God's Blessing* we shall lose all our labour: which that we may not do, let us both beg of him to guide our Minds in this affair; and let me also request of you, *Biophilus*, that you will grant me these two or three reasonable things, which are so very necessary to the success of our debate, that I shall be able to calculate the issue of it, from your ingenuity in the concession of them.

Bioph. Without more words, what are your demands?

Sebast. In the first place, I desire that you will wholly lay aside all Drollery, in the management of this cause, not

only because the business we are upon (as I hope you shall acknowledge by and by) is too weighty and solemn to be lightly and triflingly dealt withal; but especially, because this

*Preliminaries to
the dispute about
Religion,*

*Against wanton
Wit and Drollery in
religious matters.*

wanton trick of Drollery, is the only engine in the World that can do mischief to Religion. Reason, with all its batteries, can never shake it; experience can never confute it; the greatest shrewdness and sagacity can never discover any flaws in it: but there is no fence against this hail of profane and scurrillous Drollery, that, with its apish tricks and Buffoonry, is able to render not only the wisest Man in the World, but the most solid and substantial truth, ridiculous. And therefore I have observed that speculative Atheists are commonly well gifted this way; and the best of their Game is to put off that with a Jest, which they can never answer with all the Wit they have.

Bioph. 'Tis granted; I will be very serious: what would you more?

Sebast. My next demand is, That you will not doubt without cause, or some reason assignable of your doubting or denying any thing in Religion: for besides that otherwise the humour of doubting is endless and infinite, and a Man may at this rate doubt and deny the things that are most evident in nature, and even the principles of Discourse it self as well as of Religion;

Doubting without end, and denying without ground, are the usual methods of Atheists.

besides this, I say, to doubt and deny thus groundlessly and licentiously or peevishly, in not so much properly to doubt, as plainly to shew an unwillingness we have that the thing we dispute about should be true, which is cowardly and disingenuous.

There is, certainly, a modesty, or a kind of gentile

gentile carriage due to all disputes, especially of this nature as we are upon; and it is not allowable to be carping and captious, or to make use of little tricks and shifts to evade and put off an Argument instead of answering it: And let me tell you; this I have observed to be the usual method of the Adversaries of Religion. They will put a Man to prove every thing, even the most self-evident Proposition: and one question shall beget another, and that other, only to perplex the cause, and to stave off the conclusion: or when a Man hath given very reasonable evidence of the point, they will yet put it off with, it may be otherwise; as if nothing could be true but what is impossible to be otherwise: which is as absurd, as if when a Man hath with the greatest care and choice of his Materials, and according to the best Rules of Architecture built an House, he should yet be afraid to dwell in it when all is done, merely because you cannot prove it to be impossible but that such an House may presently fall and oppress him in its Ruine.

Bioph. Be secure of me in that point also, I will discourse fairly and ingenuously, and weigh the force of your Arguments with the best judgment I have: is that all you would have?

Sebast. There is but one thing more I would ask, and indeed that is implied in what you have yielded already; but that we may not mistake one another, I will mention it, *viz.* That you will be willing to believe Religion, if you see reason for it.

Bioph. That is not an ingenuous demand, *Sebastian*, if I understand you: for whilst you seem

to ask my consent, you plainly beg your cause; whereas you are to prove it with that evidence, as to make me believe it whether I will or no.

*Nothing can make
a Man believe a-
gainst his will,*

Sebast. There it is now, that makes the necessity of my demand apparent: for it is a mighty mistake, *Biophilus*, to

think that any Arguments whatsoever can be sufficient to make a Man believe whether he will or no. It is a great question whether God Almighty can make any Man believe against his will: indeed it seems a Contradiction to suppose it. He hath given Men Freedom of Will, and *put them in the hand of their own counsel*, bid them make their Election, chuse Life or Death: by which means as wise and good Men have the Glory and Comfort to co-operate towards their own Happiness: so perverse and obstinate Men have the Shame and Remorse of being guilty of their own Destruction. For when both Parties have light to guide them, and Motives and Arguments to persuade them, the one ingenuously complies, but the other wilfully refuses, and imployes the Prerogative of his nature, both against God, and his own Soul.

But in an humane way, it is plainly impossible; for if a Man have taken up his post, which he resolves to maintain, it is not in the power of reason to remove him from it; the Will is immoveable by any thing but it self, and Reason is no equal match for it. Now this is the case of a great part of the Adversaries to Religion, and this is the main disadvantage of its cause, that such Men have no mind it should be true; and then, *non persuadebis etiamsi persuade-*

ris, they will hold the Conclusion in spite of the Premises: and this is the reason why I require of you to be willing to believe, before I begin my Argument; not that I require you should believe without proof, but that you should not oppose Prejudice to my Argument, but be true to your reason and to the evidence that shall be given.

Bioph. If that be all you mean, 'tis granted also; and now that you have done with your Cautions, before you enter upon the business, I must ask one thing of you, namely, That in this Socratical way of discoursing (as you call it) you will not be too prolix in your Arguments, heaping one consequence upon the neck of another, till they make so long a train, that a Man cannot see from end to end; but deal concisely and decretorily, that I may be brought as compendiously as may be to the point you drive at.

Sebast. Indeed, *Biophilus*, if I had thought of it, I ought to have cautioned against that very thing which you now demand: for this is another capital mistake in those Men that are Strangers to these

matters, and which hath the fatal mischief to confirm a great many in Atheism, they expect to jump into the full understanding of Religion presently, whensoever they make it the Subject of their Discourse; and if it be not decided in one Syllogism or two, they immediately begin a triumph, and conclude it is a thing cannot be proved at all by reason. I confess to you that

God in compassion to Mankind, hath discovered a short cut over to the other World; I mean

*Shortness of reason
and impatience of
the whole process of
an Argument is the
fatal miscarriage of
Atheists.*

mean a very compendious way to a full knowledge of, and satisfaction in all the Myſteries of Religion, and that is by the *Holy Scripture*, which he deſiſed on purpoſe, becauſe ſome Mens Capacities will not reach to a long Argument, and the occaſions and buſie life of others will not give them leiſure to attend the difficult and laborious proceſs of reaſon. But becauſe you reject that, and will not permit God Almighty to judge for you, but will be your own judge in the caſe; therefore you muſt have patience in this way of Probation you put me upon. For if a Man will take nothing for current Coin, but what he hath wrought out of the Ore himſelf, nor believe any thing to be truth but what he hath drawn out of the depth by his own ſkill and ſtrength, he muſt be content to take a great deal of pains, and be at the expence of a great deal of time, before he can arrive at ſatisfaction; however, I hope, you ſhall have no occaſion to accuſe me of tediousneſs in this Argument.

Bioph. You ſpeak reaſon, I confeſs; and I yield you this together with all your other Preliminaries: Now therefore to the buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Know then, *Biophilus*, (without any farther Preface) that all this great Fabrick of Religion ſtands upon theſe three Pillars, *viz.*

*The three Pillars
of Religion, and the
ſtreſs that lies on
each of them.*

Fiſt, that there is a God,
as the Object of Devotion
and Religious obſervance.

Secondly, That this God,
exerciſes a Providence over
his Creatures, and Mankind eſpecially; and ſo
by obſerving how they carry themſelves towards
him,

him, and consequently being able to reward or punish them accordingly, lays an Obligation upon them to observe and worship him.

Thirdly, That Mankind is a Subject capable of such an Obligation, and of paying such Devotion and Observance to the Deity.

Mistake me not: I say, upon all these three together in Conjunction doth the truth and reality of Religion depend, but if any one of them was wanting, it will be manifest that Religion would vanish into a Romance, and come to nothing.

For in the first place, if there were no God, it would not only be certain that there is nothing to whom Religion could be due, but it would be as certain that there could be no Providence nor other Consideration to enforce the care of it; and then consequently let the Constitution of Mankind be as capable of noble performance as can be imagined, yet there could be no ground nor foundation of Religion.

Again, If we should acknowledge the Being of a God, and him also fit to be worshipped; yet if there be no Providence, so that this God doth not mind whether Men serve or deserve him, and consequently could not reward or punish accordingly, though it might in this case be fancied to be a decent thing for all Creatures to pay some kind of homage to so excellent a Being; yet there can be no danger to them if they do not so, consequently no sufficient Obligation upon them to perform it.

And lastly, If there be both a God and a Providence acknowledged, and consequently an Obligation to Religion: yet if Mankind be not
a Sub-

a Subject capable of it; that is, if either he hath it not in his power to know God's Will, or it is not in his choice to serve or disserve him, the business of Religion cannot concern him, nor can it be expected from him.

But if all these three things meet, and prove certainly true, then is this business of Religion fully founded, and as immoveable as the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, as I said, the first Proposition describes the Object, the the third qualifies the Subject, and the second lays the Obligation of Religion, which is all that can be required in the case.

Bioph. You begin very shrewdly, I protest, and like a Man that would do the business at last. Your Argument is close and substantial, your Enumeration of particulars exact, and your Consequence undeniable: I say, if those three things be proved, which yet you only suppose, the pinch of the business therefore lies in the proof of those three Assertions; and if you are able to make out the truth of them severally, as you have done the Consequence of Religion from the acknowledgment of them jointly, I must turn over a new leaf, and be a Profelyte, there is no help for it. First therefore, How do you prove there is a God?

Sebast. Ah, *Biophilus*, hath not God given sufficient proof of himself to your own Heart and Conscience, by the lively impresses he hath made of himself there; and hath he not made Demonstration of his Divinity to all the World by all his Operations, especially by the Creation of this mighty Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, and all that admirable Power, Wisdom and Goodness,

ness, which shines through the whole frame of Nature? This (let me tell you) is the proof of himself, which he himself appeals to, *Psal. 19.1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament setteth forth his handy work.* And again, *Rom. 1. 22. The invisible things of him are seen by the creation of the World, &c.*

Bioph. What pity it is that so brave a beginning should come off thus poorly! I did suspect it would come to this; but could you think, *Sebastian*, that I would be born down with the Authority of an old Book in such a case as this is? no, no, I must have my reason satisfied: I say again therefore, How do you prove there is a God?

The proof of the Being of God.

Sebast. You are, I perceive, as quick in replying as you are slow in believing: however I am glad, that though you are incredulous, you are not humorfome too. Some Man perhaps in your place would have said let me see a God; but it seems you are content to have your reason satisfied. Now do not mistake me, *Biophilus*, I did not intend to urge you with the Authority of these Sacred Writers, but with the force of the Argument they make use of. Tell me then in earnest, how do you satisfy your reason concerning the existence of any thing which you do not see? or, in brief; Do you not think that to be sufficient proof of the Being of a Cause, when it is made out by its Effects?

Bioph. Yes, I do; for if I see (*Phænomena*, or) appearances of things, which I can give no account of without resolving them into such a cause, then I conclude such a cause must be as
real

real as those appearances or effects are.

Sebast. Very good, then I tell you, after the same manner I prove there is a God, namely, because there are such Effects as speak and necessarily require such a Cause

Bioph. Now you are right again, make that out and you do your work.

Sebast. That there is such a thing as that which we call the World, or this great building of Heaven and Earth, with all the Furniture and Inhabitants of it, this I am sure you will grant; but how this World came to be what it is, is to be considered of: Now, say I, as Art betrays an Artist, and the Effect the Cause; so doth the Being of a World speak a God that made it. The mere existence of such a thing as a World, requires that there be a Cause of that existence, and that is it which we mean by a *first Cause*; and then the admirable art and plain footsteps of skill and contrivance, which are visible in the frame of this World, require that this first Cause be wise and powerful, which is the more *complete Notion of a God*. So that, (as I said) so surely as there is a World, so surely there must be a God; forasmuch as if there had not been a God to make it, there could have been nothing at all: is not this plain proof, *Biophilus*, and such as you required?

Bioph. Very far from it, I assure you (if my understanding fail me not) for, in the first place, why might not the World make it self? Or, secondly, why might it not be from Eternity, without beginning? Or, lastly, why might it not be made by chance? All which Opinions, you know, have had their respective Partisans.

Now

Now any of these ways (it is evident, that) your Argument for a God comes to nothing.

Sebast. God help you, *Biophilus*; Did not you promise that you would not seek to shift off the Arguments I should

*That the World
could not make it
self.*

bring for this cause, by little querks and evasions? And can you so soon find in your heart to give countenance to the most exploded absurdities; nay, to swallow the most palpable contradictions, rather than yield to reason for the belief of a God? And that this is your case, is evident enough, by the multitude of shifts you muster together at this present: For I assure my self, if you durst have trusted to any one of these singly, you would have insisted on that, and not mentioned the other; and you know, if each of them single are absurd, the combination of them all together, cannot mend the matter, nor make a reasonable Objection against the Argument I have brought.

Bioph. You say well, but then you must make it appear that all these are mere subterfuges, otherwise they must stand for a sufficient answer: and, I pray you, in the first place, why might not the World make it self? And then there is no need of a God.

Sebast. Even for this small reason this World could not make it self, because it implies a flat Contradiction: for then it must be Cause and Effect, in the same respect, and at the same time, *i. e.* it must act before it was, and be before it self: in a word, it must be and not be together, and if that be not absurd enough, I know not what is so.

Bioph.

Bioph. I confess, you seem to have loaded that conceit with *odium* enough: but then, how comes it to pass that the Men of your Persuasion digest all this impossibility well enough in another way, when they say, God had his Being from himself, or gave Being to himself? if this can be true, I see not but the other may.

Sebast. Very right, Sir, for either of them is impossible: but you mistake (the Men of my Persuasion, as you call them) for there is no Man of sense will say or mean, that positively God gave Beginning or Being to himself: but only negatively, that he had not his Being from any other Cause; that is, he is properly an Eternal necessary Being, without any Causes, or Beginning at all: and if you go about to apply this to the World? you forsake your first hold, and fly to your second refuge.

Bioph. I am sensible of what you say. I confess my first Objection is not tenable; but what say you then to the second? Why may not the World be Eternal? And then you seem to grant there can be no necessity of a God.

Sebast. To your second Evasion I oppose these three things, which when you have considered of, I doubt not but you will see it to be no better than the former.

That the World could not be from Eternity.

Namely, First, I will shew you that you can gain nothing by it, if it should be true. Secondly, that the supposition of it is more difficult and incredible, than that which you seek to avoid by it: and, Thirdly, That it is impossible it should be true.

First, You can gain nothing towards the satisfaction of your Mind, or for the easing you of any Difficulty, by asserting the Eternity of the World. For the greatest Difficulty in the whole business of Religion, and indeed in all Philosophy too, is, to acknowledge such a thing as an Eternal Being, or any thing that hath neither cause nor beginning, which here you swallow without chewing, in supposing the World to be Eternal.

It is true indeed, if a Man look to the very bottom of things, it is not to be avoided, but that some Eternal, and self-existent Being must be granted. For seeing nothing can give Being to it self (as I shewed you but now) it is plain that either something must have been without beginning, or nothing could have been at all; *i. e.* there must be either an Eternal God, or some Eternal Cause or other, or nothing could ever have been in time. For whatever first begins to be, must take its rise from something that had no beginning.

This, I say, must necessarily be yielded by every considering Man, and you confess as much, when, to avoid the acknowledgment of a God, you suppose the World to be Eternal. Now in so doing you bring in as great a Difficulty (at least) as that which you would seem to avoid; for the Belief of an Eternal Being is manifestly the hardest thing to conceive in the whole Notion of a God: so that (as I said) you expedite no difficulty thereby, but only plainly betray an unwillingness to believe there is a God, and that is all that comes of it.

Nay, secondly, This Supposition of yours is far more difficult than that which it is designed to avoid. For it is apparently more unreasonable to allow Eternity to the World than to God ; because to be eternal, or to be without Cause and Beginning, implies a necessity of existence, or that such a thing could not but be : for nothing can be conceived to be without Efficient or Cause of its Being, but that which could not but be, or which was impossible not to be. Now I dare appeal to you whether it be not more reasonable to suppose such a superlatively excellent kind of Being, to be the privilege of a wise, powerful and free Agent (by which we mean a God) than to apply it to that Lump of Matter (which we call the World ;) or (which amounts to the same thing) whether it be not more likely that this wonderful Prerogative of first Being, or necessity of existence (which you acknowledge must be seated somewhere) should be accompanied with Life, Understanding, Freedom of Will, &c. all which are in the Notion of a God, than that such a Prerogative should go alone, and so the first and principal Being, be in effect one of the meanest, as being destitute of all those other Perfections, as must needs be, if the World be that first and Eternal Being.

Especially if you cast in this also, that neither you nor any rational Man would ever have gone about to fantasie the World's being necessarily existent or without beginning, but only for want of a God to make it (I mean upon account of the difficulty of understanding such a Being as is required in the case ;) now forasmuch as that includes no greater difficulty, than what

you

you are constrained to acknowledge without a God, it is extremely unjust to rely upon it as a sufficient Objection against him.

But, thirdly and lastly, This Suggestion of yours concerning the Eternity of the World is plainly impossible to be true: as it were easie to make out in any of the several parts or parcels, of which it consists. But I will content my self to shew it you in the instance of Mankind only, and that after this manner.

If Mankind was from Eternity or without Beginning, then it must consequently be acknowledged that there have been infinite Successions of Men, one after another, and that some of those Generations have been infinitely distant from others. For all this is implied in infinite Succession, or the Eternity of successive Beings. But now let us take what Link we will of this Chain; I mean, let us take what Man soever in this infinite Line, it is certain he will be but Thirty, or Forty, or a Hundred Years (more or less) elder than some Son of his, which proceeded from him by lineal Descent. And then it is as plain that in this case, that Son of his (whoever he was) is not eternal or of infinite Duration, because he is of less Duration than his Father, by the said Thirty or Forty Years, (or more or less:) and on the other side, it is plain also, that the Father cannot be eternal, or of infinite Duration neither, because he is but Thirty or Forty Years (as aforesaid) elder than the said Son who was finite. For a finite number added to a finite can never make an infinite. Therefore (upon the whole) this race of Mankind cannot be infinite, but must have

had a beginning, and consequently there must be a God who gave beginning to him, and to all things else. What think you now, *Biophilus*? what is become of your second Evasion of a God, by supposing the World to be Eternal?

Bioph. Truly I cannot well tell what to say, but that I am deceived in you; I suspected you would have entertained me with long Harangues, and have wheedled me with Oratory; but I fear now you will run me down by main force, unless there be some trick of Sophistry in it.

Sebast. God forbid that I should tell a lye for him, whose Cause needs not to be defended by a cheat; no, assure your self the Argument is found and substantial; if I had known the least flaw in it, I would never have made use of it; and I am confident the more you consider it, the more solid and unanswerable you will find it.

Bioph. Then I perceive, I am reduced to my last refuge, That the World was made by Chance, or else I must yield you there is a God; and why may not that be true, which a great Sect of Philosophers, I mean the Epicureans, held, *viz.* That some lucky hit of Matter at last produced the World without a God? and if once things were gotten into Being without him, there could be no necessity afterwards to introduce him, and consequently no obligation of Religious Observance towards him.

Sebast. In those last words you reason very well, *Biophilus*, and it's pity you had not a better Hypothesis to exercise it upon. For it is very true, that if it was possible to imagine a
World

World to be made any other way, or without a God, there could be no sufficient reason to bring him upon the Stage, or much less any Religious Obligation towards him; and therefore doubtless it was only Hypocrisie and a piece of Cunning in your Epicurean Friends, to bring in a God when they had fancied the making of the World without him: the former they did to decline the *odium* of flat Atheism, and to secure themselves from the danger of Humane Laws; but by the latter they undermined the reasons of Religion, which was the thing they aimed at. But as to that Hypothesis of theirs, which you now espouse, it is the most miserable shift of all you have made. For,

1. This takes for granted, That the matter of the World existed of it self and was Eternal, which I doubt not but hath appeared absurd enough by what hath been said already upon the former Head.

2. It supposes also matter to be in motion, without any cause of that motion; which is worse than the former, since we can never satisfy our selves that motion naturally belongs to matter, but contrariwise, that it is only passive, and capable of receiving it from something else. Now till these two things be proved, it is in vain to dream what lucky hits might happen in order to the Production of a World.

3. It supposes mere Chance and blind Contingency to be the sole cause of the most Wise, Regular and Artificial Effects that can be imagined. Now it seems beyond measure ridiculous to think that such a World as this plainly is, wherein there are undeniably all the foot-

Steps of the most exquisite skill and contrivance; wherein (I say) there is both such admirable variety of things, and yet such exact order and correspondence of one thing with another, and withal such constancy in the Laws of the whole, that this should be effected notwithstanding, without any Reason or Wisdom, and be the product of blind Chance. It were certainly a thousand times more manly to imagine that Books were written by the casual co-incidence of Letters, or Houses and Ships were built by a fortuitous jumble of Stones, Iron and Timber, than that Chance should make such a World as this, which for Greatness, Order, Symmetry and Beauty, and all other instances of Art and Wisdom infinitely surpasses all humane performances whatsoever: and now, what is become of your three formidable Objections?

Bioph. Nay, do not triumph too soon, *Sebastian*, the Field is not yet won; For I have a reserve, that may chance put you to it still, and it is this; You have, I confess, argued smartly to prove the World could not be made without an Efficient, but you forget that this will recoil upon your self, who have taken no care for Matter out of which God should make a World; and sure it is as difficult to want Matter as to want an Architect.

*God needed not
Matter out of which
to make a World.*

Sebast It is very true, I have not, in my Hypothesis provided Matter for the making of the World, but yet I have proved an eternal, perfect and unlimited Being for the Efficient, who may very well be supposed to be able to supply the want of that

out

out of his own eminent Perfection: for it is certain that the first and supreme Cause must needs have the Root and Seeds of all things in himself, and eminently contain all the powers of inferior Causes, and consequently may well be supposed able to supply a material Cause, at least here is no contradiction in all this, and therefore it cannot be said to be impossible, (for nothing can be justly pronounced to be the latter, but what falls under the former) but now for motion to begin without a mover, and any thing to be effected without an active Cause, is plainly contradictory to our Reason, and therefore to be pronounced impossible.

You see an instance, or at least some kind of resemblance of the former in our selves? we frame thoughts out of the pregnancy of our own Minds without any Matter to make them of, and therefore we may much rather allow God to be able to do so.

Besides, if I should grant you that God had Matter at hand out of which to make a World, you would be at the same loss still to know how he was able to make Souls out of it; and such things there are in the World, which it is every whit as difficult to shew how they can be extracted out of Matter, as to suppose Matter it self to be supplied by the unconfined power of the Supreme Agent; and therefore you had as good rest satisfied in the Answer above, *viz.* That for any thing to begin to be without an Efficient is contradictory, but to begin to be without a material Cause can never be proved to be so. And now, I hope, your Reserve is vanquished as well as your Main Body, and you will now acknow-

ledge that notwithstanding all your Objections to the contrary the mere Fabrick of the World is a sufficient evidence of a God.

Phil. I have with great satisfaction heard all this long Dispute between you, my two Friends; I could not in Conscience take your part, *Biophilus*, and I know *Sebastian*, you need not my assistance, and I am glad to see Victory begin to incline to the right side: but all this while I could not chuse but stand and admire the Divine Patience, who suffers the curious and ingrateful wit of Man to impeach his very Being. Lord! That those who were brought into the World by him, should so strenuously endeavour to exclude him out of it; and that those should muster up all their wits against him, that made them to differ from the Beasts.

It is matter of just wonder that Men should be so unwilling to believe a God, and take so much pains to dispute him out of Being.

But what should be the occasion of this I cannot imagine, nor what should tempt Men to be so unwilling to believe a God. If like (what the Poets say of) *Saturn*, he eat up his own Children; or like *Moloch*, the Idol of the *Ammonites*, he could be pretended to take delight in the sad cries and dying groans of his Worshipers, they could not well do more against him than they do.

Or if he was a severe Tyrant, that lay at catch for his Subjects, and like *Busyris* or *Phalaris*, imploy'd himself wholly in devising Tortures for them; or if he was a God of mere Power and Will, and so always to be horribly dreaded, because Men know not what use he would make

of his unlimited Power, no wonder then if they were willing to be rid of him.

Or if he was only (*Θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς*) a mere necessary Agent, that only served a certain turn in the World, namely, to give beginning to Motion, then when that work was done, Men might perhaps be content to spare him.

But since he is perfect Wisdom, and perfect Goodness, and in one word, Perfection it self, containing in his own Nature all that is desirable, the first of Beings, and therefore can want nothing, because there was nothing before him to restrain or limit him, and because all things were in him as in their Fountain, infinitely full and self-sufficient, that he can need nothing from his Creatures, nor can grudge them any thing that is fit for them.

A God that made us merely out of the overflowings of his own Goodness, and that he might have those whom he might delight and make happy in the Communications of himself to them.

A God that is always present to us, tender of us, and daily doth us good in this World, and hath provided an Heaven of unspeakable felicity to receive us into, and treat us in, when he takes us hence.

That God is a desirable Being, &c.

What can tempt us, I say, to wish he were not, to dispute his Being, or so much as to entertain a doubt concerning him, who is the most desirable thing in the whole World?

Come, *Biophilus*, lay down your Arms and submit to this great and good God, and he will pardon you; you dispute all this while against
your

your self and your own Comfort more than against him. There is no contending with the Almighty, he can confute you with Thunder, and Fire, and Brimstone, and so he might right himself, but then you will perish; but he is pitiful and gracious, and had rather you should be sensible of his Goodness, than feel the effects of his Power. You said, Reason would convince you, and I think you have had it from *Sebastian*, deal ingenuously therefore; Do you not see sufficient ground to believe there is a God? It is no dishonour to yield to truth.

Bioph. I perceive I am assaulted on both sides, like the Traveller in the Fable, by the Sun and the Wind; *Sebastian*, hath press'd hard upon me by Arguments, and you, *Philander*, have charm'd me with your Eloquence, and the lovely Picture you have drawn of God. I can no longer withstand you, I yield, I yield there is a God.

Sebast. God be thanked we are gotten one step onwards of our way towards Religion, we have a God to worship; but I must ingenuously confess to you (as I have intimated already) that this will not do the business if we go no farther. For though in Consideration that there is a God, and he a great and excellent Being, it may be fit and decent to worship him, yet this hath not the Effect of a Law, nor sufficiently obliges any Creature to the doing of it, unless it ap-

That there is a Providence in and over the World, is the second Principle of Religion.

pear also that this God exercise a Providence over the World, that is, unless he observe the Carriage, remark the Actions whether good or evil, of those he expects Religi-

ous

ous Observance from, and will some way or other call them to account, and reward or punish them respectively. But if this second point be made out too, this will bring the business home, and make it the great concern of all those that love themselves, to be devout and religious.

Bioph. I am very sensible of it, *Sebastian*, and that not only because my old Master *Epicurus* granted a God, but denying a Providence, thought himself secure enough from that God, and under no Obligations to Religion; but also because your own Method, which you have laid down, requires it: let that therefore be your next undertaking.

Sebast. It shall be so, *Biophilus*, and that not only for the Reasons you give me for so doing, but also because I am aware, that although the Argument I made use of for the proof of the Being of God, be strong and unanswerable, yet I confess it was something obscure and metaphysical (which there was no help for) but now if I make out that there is a Providence, this will add both light and strength to what I have hitherto discoursed: For though it may be imagined that there is a God, and yet no Providence, yet it is indubitable, that if there be a Providence, there must be a God.

Now that there is such a Providence as we speak of, I doubt not to convince any considerate Man of, these two ways, *viz.*

1. From the Causes and Reasons of it.
2. From the visible Instances and Effects of it.

Proof of a Providence.

In the first place, There is very great reason to assure oneself that God exercises a Providence over the World, from the Consideration of those Perfections, which (by what hath been said already) appear to be in the Divine Nature, namely, Infinite Wisdom and Power, both which we must necessarily ascribe to him, whom we allow to be Creator of the World. Now there can be no reason to doubt whether it be in his power to look over and mind all the passages of the World, when we have acknowledged his power to have been sufficient to give beginning to that which was not, and to make a World out of nothing, which is incomparably the more difficult Province.

And then if we are satisfied that such a Providence is not impossible, the same Wisdom which joined with his Power in making the World, will oblige him to exert and put forth himself in the management of it when he hath made it. For it is not conceivable that a wise Being should wholly abandon and be unconcerned for that piece of Workmanship of his, wherein he hath made the greatest demonstration of Art and Skill in the contrivance of. Such a supine negligence as this is not easily to be suspected in the meanest of intelligent Beings; and therefore there can be no colour of reason that the first and most perfect of Beings should be thought guilty of it.

This I take to be a sufficient Argument of a Providence between you and me, now that you are come to the acknowledgment of a God and Creator of the World; but I will not insist upon

upon it, because I promised to give such evidence of this Point, as should at the same time (and *à majori*, as they say) conclude the former Principle also, I mean, That there is a God.

And therefore I should now come to the second way of probation, *viz.* from the visible instances and effects of a Providence, but (you remember) I have already prevented my self herein, by what passed between us in a former Conference, where I shew'd, at large, the evident

V. Conf. 2. pag.
183. to p. 201.

Footsteps of Providence in his managing or over-ruling the ordinary course of nature in two remarkable instances, *viz.* 1. In the Prophecies and Predictions of things to come, which have been so admirably verified in the Event, as must argue an All-seeing Eye over all the Motions of second Causes. And 2. In the Miracles that have been wrought in the several Ages of the World, wherein the Divine Majesty hath apparently interposed, and either suspended or overruled, heightened or accelerated the Motion and force of Natural causes, and by both together, given proof of his Being, and of his minding the affairs of the World.

I assure my self I shall not need to repeat that Argument at large, but may trust your Memory for it; only if now upon so long time of Consideration, you have any thing material to object on that account I am ready to make good what I have asserted.

Bioph. I must needs say you deal fairly and ingenuously thus far; and now that I recollect the summ and drift of that discourse of yours, I have,

The great Objection against Providence is, that there are no Miracles to be seen now.

have, as I think, this very material thing to say against it, namely, That we cannot observe any such Interpositions of Divine Providence as you speak of now-a-days, but the World is left wholly to the course of Natural Causes. If you could have appealed either to Miracles or Prophecy in the present Age, so that a Man might have made his own Eyes witnesses of matter of fact, then the Argument would have been irrefragable; but forasmuch as we see no such things in the present times, why should we be so credulous as to believe there ever were? Assail me this difficulty clearly and substantially, and it will go a great way with me; for I acknowledge (as you observe) that if this Argument be found, the influence of it extends farther than the present Question, and to be sure will leave no doubt that there is a God.

Sebast. I am very sensible of the Importance of your Objection, and of the necessity that a sufficient Answer be made to it; but I do not, in the least, doubt but you will find it in the following Particulars, by that time you have laid them together.

A full Answer to the aforesaid Objection.

First, I suppose you will grant me that there can be no need of, or reason for God's displaying himself by Miracles or a Spirit of Prophecy in the present Age, for the assurance of a Providence if so be we may be sufficiently secured that he hath indubitably given those evidences already in former Ages. For he that hath once sufficient grounds given him to believe such a Point hath

hath always an Obligation upon him to believe that thing, without repeated Proofs of it. And it is unreasonable to expect that God Almighty should be bound to exert his Omnipotency, or any way put out of course the order of Natural Causes, merely for the Gratification of Mens Curiosity or Phancy, but only for the satisfaction of their reason in so important a Point.

Then, Secondly, In the next place I will shew you that (bating merely the gratifying of Curiosity and Phancy as aforesaid) we may have as credible and sufficient assurance of a Miracle, or other extraordinary passage of Providence, which was done many Ages ago, as we could have, if such a thing was to be done in the present Age. This will perhaps seem a little strange to you at first, but your wonder will abate when you consider these two things:

1. That it cannot be expected that God should so far comply with the humour of Men, as to work Miracles every day, and in the sight of every Man. Miracles are a kind of Parenthesis in the ordinary course of Nature, or, as it were, a short Digression from the usual method of things. Now if such Digressions should be daily made, it would be, in a manner, a total superseding of the ordinary course of Nature; and so instead of serving the particular turn or humour of some Men, the whole Race of Mankind would be deprived of a greater and more remarkable Miracle than all the other put together, namely, that of the stable and constant course of Nature. And such frequent irregularities as must follow upon

The demand of daily and frequent Miracles is very absurd.

that

that Concession, would put a very great Temptation upon Men to suspect that there was no constant Law and Rule in the Creation, but that Chance carried all before it; which would make an Objection indeed against Providence. And yet it is certain that notwithstanding this horrible mischief, so it must be done, if every particular Man must have his Eyes witnesses of Miracles before he believes them: For it is plain that if God should vouchsafe one or more Miracles to the present Age, it could not be done before every Man: and therefore some of them, if they will believe a Providence upon that account, must trust to other Mens Eyes for the grounds of their belief.

And thus we see it was in those times and places where Miracles were most frequent, as suppose in the time of our Saviour, those mighty Works which he wrought whilst he was upon Earth, and even his Resurrection it self, were not obvious to the Eyes of all Men, but only to so many as might render them sufficiently credible by their Testimony; and as for the generality, they must content themselves to *believe without seeing*, St. John 20, 29. as he himself told them.

Ancient Miracles are as credible as those that are present, and in some respects more certain.

2. If God should so far condescend to the incredulity of Men, as to permit generally their Eyes and Senses to be witnesses of such extraordinary Passages of providence as we speak of, it would not have such success as you imagine, for there would not want Objections against this also: some would

would then suspect their very Senses, or say that either their Imaginations were deluded, or else it may be all was done by Natural Causes, tho' perhaps they did not well understand them, or at least would conclude that which appears to be a Miracle was merely an Accident, and so there is no account to be sought or given of it. Thus we know the greatest Miracles that ever were wrought have been shifted of, and eluded even in the times wherein they were done, and by those Men that saw them. But now when those things that I make the instances of a Providence, (the Ancient Miracles I mean) have undergone the Test of Time, and been canvassed and discussed in several Ages, and yet no flaw is found in them: in this case, I say, we have more full ground for our belief, than if the things had been fresh before our Eyes: for that same incredulous humour which now objects against the credit of things, because they were done long ago, would find out as good a trick to put upon a present Miracle (if it was to be had) namely, such a Man would say (and with more colour of reason) that though I cannot detect the Cheat of this for the present, yet time may discover it, which cannot be said in the other case.

But, Thirdly and lastly, I add to all aforesaid, that tho' it is true, that all Ages are not alike illustrated with such prodigious Acts of Providence as are properly and strictly call'd Miracles, yet there is no time of the World wherein there are not very plainly the Prints of Divinity, and

*The present times
not destitute of marks
of Providence.*

evidences of a Providence continually presiding over the World, if Man do not humourfomly despise them (for want of the pompous Circumstances of Miracles) or stupidly over-look them, because of their commonness and frequency ; such as (for example) the preserving the several species of things in the World, that amongst that vast multitude of the kinds of Birds, or Insects, &c. and their several enmities to one another, and the many accidents all of them are exposed to, there should notwithstanding in so long a tract of time, not be any one kind of them lost or extinguished.

That the Holy Scriptures and Christian Religion should be upheld in spite of the Combination of Wit and Ignorance, Power and Malice against them.

That Civil Government should be preserved against all the interests of resolutely wicked Men, and against all the brutish violence of the enraged *Mobile*.

Besides the remarkable Infatuation of the Counsels, discovering the Plots, and defeating the Designs of Crafty and Atheistical Politicians: The frequent terrours upon the Consciences, and damps upon the Spirits of the most desperate and flagitious Men, and the assisting, animating and comforting the Hearts of good Men in their greatest Agonies and most difficult Undertakings. Some of these things I mentioned before in our former Conference, and all of them are such as happen in every Age, and are never the less evidences of Providence for being ordinary.

Indeed

Indeed it may and doth fall out that now and then things happen quite otherwile, as that Conspiracies of wicked Men are successful, &c. and God Almighty seems to order it so on purpose because he will not be traced in his Methods, and because he will leave some trials of Mens willingness to believe in him and depend upon him? but the other course is so usual and things often fall out so patly that way, that it must be extream humourousness to deny a Providence in them.

But, besides all these, there is one thing more comes now to my Mind, which is indeed beyond all the forementioned, and seems to be set up on purpose by Divine Providence as a standing Monument of it self to all Ages, and that is the present Condition of the *Jews*.

They were once a great and flourishing Kingdom, and fortunate beyond all example; but now from the time that they grew incurably wicked and rebellious against the God that had so signally bless'd them, and had to all their other impieties crucified the Saviour of the World; They have now (I say) for the space of sixteen or seventeen hundred of Years, been *like the Field which God hath cursed*, and been the most prodigious instance of unhappiness that ever was in the World. Forasmuch as though they are still vastly numerous, a cunning, crafty and projecting sort of People, yet they are every where scattered through all Nations, but every where under marks of Infamy, and no where able to become a People, so as to live under Laws and a Government of their own: Notwithstanding all which, and which is the wonder of all, they keep up
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their Stock and Pedigree with the greatest exactness imaginable, as if God intended (as certainly he did) by all this to set them forth as a lively instance both of his just Providence, and of the truth of the Spirit of Prophecy in the Holy Scriptures. And now this, together with the foregoing instances, I think, affords sufficient evidence that God doth not now neglect the World, and leave all to run in the Road of Natural Causes, but even in these latter Ages as well as formerly gives some signal strokes of an over-ruling hand: which was the thing to be proved. And thus the two first Principles of Religion are secured. What think you, *Biophilus*? deal plainly and if you have any thing farther to say to the contrary, propound it.

Bioph. Truly, I have nothing very material to say farther.

Sebast. Then God be thanked we have now gained two feet for Religion to stand upon; namely, we have a God to whom it is due, and we have an Obligation from the Consideration of his Providence, to make all the World careful and observant of him, at least so far as any part of the Creation is capable of such a Duty.

Bioph. Very right, but I remember you said, That to lay the Foundation of Religion effectually, there must be consideration also of the subjects of it: and it must appear in particular, that Mankind is under a capacity of the aforesaid Obligation, and of paying and performing this Duty towards the Divine Majesty accordingly. Now

The third Principle of Religion, that Man is a Subject capable of it.

as for this, though I foresee no Difficulty in the Case, yet however, I pray, express your self a little more fully about it, lest I should be under any mistake.

Sebast. The bottom of this third Point is no more but this: to make Mankind a Subject capable of the Obligations of Religion, these three things are requisite:

1. That he be able in some measure to judge what carriage from himself is fit and decent towards God.

2. That he be a free Agent, and have it in his choice and power to determine himself towards the performance of what he understands to be fit and decent, or towards the contrary if he will.

3. That he be able to reflect upon what he hath done, so as to accuse and condemn, or to acquit and justify himself accordingly as his Actions and Carriage towards the Deity have been agreeable or disagreeable to the judgment aforesaid.

The first of these Powers and Capacities is commonly called *Understanding*; the second, *Will* or *Freedom of choice*; and the third is known by the name of *Conscience*.

Without the first of these, namely, if Mankind had not *Understanding* to discern the difference of things, and some Rule within him whereby to judge of moral Good and Evil, he would be lawless and brutish, having no other measures to go by, than his Passions and Sense.

Without the second namely, If he had not *Freedom of Will* to determine himself towards Good and Evil, as he pleased, he must then be

under a fatal necessity of doing whatsoever he should happen to do: and then as he could give no proof of his Temper and Inclination, so there could be no such thing as acceptableness to God when he did well, nor blameableness when he did otherwise; because there could be no such things as Vertue or Vice in his Case: and consequently no more room for either rewards or punishments, than there is in the motion of Plants or Stones, or any other the most insensible things.

Without the third and last, *viz.* If Mankind had not such a faculty in him as we call *Conscience*, so as to reflect upon his own Actions and Carriage, and by Vertue of which he either applauds and justifies himself when he hath obeyed the best reason of his Mind, or upbraids and scourges himself whensoever he hath done otherwise, he could neither have any spur to Vertue, nor check upon Vice, and consequently would have no regard what use he made of his Liberty.

But by all these together (if they appear to be inherent in Humane Nature) Mankind is fully qualified for the Obligations of Religion.

Now looking over the World as far as we can, we find no Creature that we converse with, to be indowed with these faculties but our selves, and then looking into our selves we find by undeniable experience that we have every one of the aforesaid capacities in our Nature: And hence I conclude that Man, and Man only of all Creatures (in the visible World) is the Subject of Religion. And this I called the third Fundamental Principle of Religion; not that I take it to be properly and strictly so, but in regard

gard it is manifest by what hath been said, that there can be no sure ground for Religion without it.

And thus, I think, I have fully answered your demand concerning the ground-work of Religion, and laid out a Foundation both large enough and strong enough to bear the whole Structure. And now I hope you will see no cause to suspect it to be a mere Melancholy Fancy, or politick Stratagem, the result of Education, or effect of Weakness and Fear, but the most manly and rational thing that any Man can concern himself about.

Bioph. I confess you have done as you say, *Sebastian*, and I thank you heartily for it; it is true, I could still have found out something or other to have replied, but I promised you I would not use mere subterfuges and disingenuous shifts, and I find without them there is nothing to be said farther in the Case; so that in plain *English* I must profess I cannot tell whether more to admire, you or my self, pardon the Expression; I mean, whether more to be ashamed of my own stupidity, that have thus laugh'd in my sleeve at Religion, or your Prudence that first hedg'd me in with your Preliminary Demands, that my Mind could not rove from the Point, and then pursued me with close Arguments, that I have no way to escape. In short, I am convinced so far, that Religion is a thing diligently to be heeded, and carefully inquired into; I pray therefore, leave me not in the Briars you have brought me into, but as you have discovered to me the Foundations, so tell me what Superstructures must be made upon them. In

the first place, what do you mean by Religion?

A general Description of Religion.

Sebast. By Religion in general I understand nothing else but a serious Study to know God, together with a careful endeavour to please him and procure his Favour. This is that which not only the several Sects of Christians mean by Religion, but is that which all Men of Sense, and even the better sort of Pagans themselves agree in.

Bioph. By the easiness of your Expression, and the few words you have made use of in this Description, one would think the business it self was more easie than I doubt I shall find it to be: but, I pray, however consider me as an Idiot and a Stranger to this matter, and condescend to explain your self more particularly; and first give me leave to ask you what you mean by the knowing of God? Do you intend any thing more than the acknowledgment that there is a God?

Sebast. Yes, *Biophilus*, I here understand a great deal more by the knowing of God than I did in all our former Discourse, whilst we were only laying the Foundations of Religion, there indeed no more was requir'd than to acknowledge his Being, and that because (as I then shew'd you) therein lies the first reason of such a thing as we call Religion. For there is nothing to oblige a Man to have any regard to himself, nor to make any difference of his Actions, till he acknowledge such a Being as hath a Sovereignty over him, and to whom he is accountable for his Carriage. But now when that is resolved of, then there arises a twofold

The necessity of studying to know the Divine Nature.

twofold occasion of studying farther to know the God which he acknowledges to be :

Namely, First, Because it cannot but appear a point of great decency and regard towards this acknowledged Sovereign of the World, that we employ our Minds, the noblest powers we have, in the study and contemplation of him; and indeed to do otherwise is not only unmanly, but an Argument of such contempt as is not consistent with the real persuasion of such a Being as God.

Again, Secondly, Forasmuch as by the bare acknowledgement that there is a God, we see reason to make a difference of things, and to have a care of our Actions with respect to him; so now when we are come to that, it will farther concern us in particular to have some Rule and measure to govern our selves by, and whereby to make a Distinction of Good and Evil, to the end that we may please him in what we do : and that is only attainable by serious study of the Divine Nature, Attributes and such Declarations of his Mind and Will as he hath made.

For you must know that it is not every thing whatsoever we may fantasie, that will please him. For then all Religions would be alike true and safe, and none but Atheists and Hypocrites could miscarry. But it is certain God hath a Mind of his own, and that Devotion or Observance only pleases him which is agreeable to him; all other is foolish Superstition, and at best but lost labour.

Bioph. But I hope, after all, you do not intend to represent the Deity as a touchy and humourous kind of Being : for then consequently

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ly, Religion must needs be the most anxious thing in the World, and far from what you have hitherto made me believe it was.

Sebast. God forbid, *Biophilus*, that such a thought of the Divine Majesty should enter into any Man's Heart, or that I should be guilty of mis-representing Religion at that rate. As for God himself, he is certainly nothing else but wise and great Goodness, too great to be fondly taken with little things, and too wise and good to be offended with little things; and therefore Religion cannot consist in Niceties and Punctilio's, as if it was the servile flattery of a Tyrant, and not the ingenuous service of loyal Subjects to a brave and generous Prince; notwithstanding, as I said before, he hath

*The necessity of
studying to know the
Divine Will as well
as his Nature.*

a Mind and Will of his own, and expects that should be complied with if we intend to procure his Favour.

Bioph. But it is not enough that a Man live well and vertuously and serve God devoutly? Will not that please and propitiate him to us.

Sebast. Yes doubtless it will, but still you must have a Rule and a Standard for all that; otherwise there will be no real difference of Virtue and Vice, nor no distinction between Superstition and Devotion.

Bioph. Now am I in a Wilderness, when I thought my self even at *Canaan*.

Sebast. Why, what's the Matter *Biophilus*? Could you think that mere good meaning or any kind of blind Devotion would serve the turn? or that Man might prescribe to his Maker what he should be pleased withal?

Bioph.

Bioph. The matter is plainly this, *Sebastian*: I perceive that if a Man have a mind to be Religious, he shall be at a loss which way to take, and what to do; his own Conscience, you say, is not a sufficient Guide for him, because that may be mistaken, and therefore he must have a Rule; well, to come by this Rule; he must (say you) study to know God's Nature, and that is not enough, but God hath a Mind and Will of his own, and that must be known too; and that's not all neither, for he may alter his Mind, and then we are at a worse loss than ever: if therefore this be the State of the Case, it is to no purpose to think or talk farther of this business.

Sebast. Come, cheer up, Man, there is no danger of all this you dream of, this seeming difficulty will presently clear up, by that time I have told you, that God's Mind and Nature are so entirely the same, that whatsoever is agreeable to his Nature cannot be contradicted by any Act of his Will; and whatsoever is the express of his Will, is also a true Copy of his Nature (at least in the general.) And therefore if we perfectly understood the Divine Nature, there would be no need that he should make any Declaration of his Will; for then it would be the only instance of Religion to imitate and endeavour to resemble him, which is the truest honour that can be done to him, and consequently could not fail to please him. But now forasmuch as we neither do nor can perfectly understand his Nature, because it is too great and too sublime for us to take a full

*The measures of
Devotion are partly
the Divine Nature,
and partly his Will*

view

view of it therefore it is that we stand in need of the Declaration of his Will for our guide in his service.

Bioph. If this be so (as it seems reasonable enough) then why did you speak of his Nature in this Case, seeing the business lies in the studying of the Divine Will; at least, if there be any such thing as a Declaration of it which may be come at?

Sebast. The reason of my making mention both of the Divine Nature and the Divine Will to you in this Case, will become as evident to you as any thing we have discoursed of, by that time you have considered these two things.

First, That forasmuch as natural light (which is the common Principle of Mankind) can make some discovery of the Nature of God to us, but little or nothing of his Will; therefore it is necessary, that such as have not Divine Revelation, should by the use of Reason study the Divine Nature for their guidance in the mean time.

Again, Secondly, It is very considerable, that even those that live under the advantage of Divine Revelation, may be imposed upon by counterfeit Oracles, and such as falsely pretend to be discoverers of the Will of God, if they do not well study the Divine Nature, by the knowledge of which they may be able to detect such Frauds and Impostures; for if a Doctrine be broached in the World, that is contrary to the natural and reasonable Notions Men have of God, although such Doctrine

See Deuteronomy, 13. 1, 2, 3, &c.

pretend never so much to Divinity; nay, if it should seem to have the same miraculous Attestation to it that

that the Gospel it self hath, we may and ought to reject it upon this account, that we are sure nothing can come from God which contradicts himself; nor can there be any Declaration of his Will which is contrary to the known measures of his Nature: and therefore the Nature of God as well as the Will of God, is to be studied and attended to as our Rule in this great affair of Religion.

Bioph. Now I think I understand you thus far; and if I be not mistaken, then I have two great things still to ask your assistance in: 1. That you will help me to understand the Divine Nature. 2. That you will direct me how I may come to the knowledge of his Will, by which two together I find I must be enabled both to please him and procure his favour: and first I pray explain the Nature of God to me.

Sebast. I know you are a wiser Man than to expect from me that I should give you a perfect Definition of the Divine Majesty; for by what hath been said already, you cannot but be sensible of the vanity and impossibility of such an attempt on my part, and consequently of the absurdity of such a demand on yours: but if your desire be (as I suppose it is) that I should represent God to you under such Expressions as that we may understand one another what we mean when we speak of him, and also may sufficiently distinguish him from all other Beings, then I doubt not to give you satisfaction.

Bioph. I ask you no more but what you promise, saving that I expect also that your De-

*A Description of
the Divine Nature.*

scription

scription of him should not only render him a fit object of Religion, but also in some measure a Rule for it too, according to what you last discoursed.

Sebast. I understand you, and why may not these few words satisfy you, *viz. God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit.*

Bioph. Ah, *Sebastian!* The words are few indeed, but they are such as will put you to the expence of a great many more before I shall understand them; every word is a Mystery, *Spirit, Eternal, Infinite.*

Sebast. Be of good courage, *Biophilus*, for though I foretold you we should never be able fully to comprehend the Divine Majesty, yet with a little patience and attention you shall find those Phrases very intelligible, and neither to be Nonsense or Gibberish, nor Cramp-words to conceal a conceited Ignorance under, as your old Friends the Epicureans are wont to call them.

Bioph. I confess you have not disappointed me hitherto, and therefore I will not despair, nor do I intend any longer to dispute with you, but to learn of you; therefore, I pray, in the first

The word [Spirit] explained, and the nature of the thing

place, tell me plainly and intelligibly what a Spirit is, and what you mean when you say, God is a Spirit?

Sebast. You may remember, that what you now demand was the Subject of part of our former Conference, wherein I endeavoured to settle the notion of a Spirit,

V. Conf. 2. from page 176. to page 179.

and not only to convince you of the necessity of acknowledging such a kind of Being, but also to possess

possess you with some apprehensions of the nature of it: and therefore, I hope, I shall not need to go over that again. But now; when I call God a Spirit, I mean neither more nor less than this, namely, *That he is an understanding, free and powerful Substance, which yet is not visible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senses*, this, I take it, is the proper notion of a Spirit.

In the first place, I call a Spirit a *Substance*, that you may be sure I mean not a Spectre or Fantom (as your Friends use to suspect) but something which is as real as Matter or Body it self.

And yet, in the second place, to distinguish it from Matter or bodily Substance. I say, it is *not visible*, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senses, as that other kind of Substance doth, or at least is supposed to do.

And then, in the last place, to shew you that this is no contradiction, and to deliver you from the prejudice of Sense, I represent to you the *Effects* and *Operations* of a Spirit, which are such as must needs argue it to be a Substance, and an excellent one too; namely, that it hath power to move the Matter wherein it resides, and also hath Understanding and Will or Choice, which Matter is incapable of.

So that look what that thing which we call a Soul is in our selves, that doth this notion of Spirit imply God to be to the whole World; namely, as by *that* we move our Bodies, and understand a reason for, and can give check to our own motion, so doth God preside over the World.

Bioph. I acknowledge you have delivered a consistent notion of such a thing as a Spirit, and therefore

therefore I see no impossibility that there should be such a thing. But how doth it appear that there is really and actually such a thing as a Spirit, or that if there be a God, he must needs be a Spirit?

Sebast. The reason is very plain by what hath been said already, when I proved to you the existence of a God. For there it was confessed on both hands, that something must be Eternal, or nothing could have been at all; and then I demonstrated that Matter could not be that Eternal Being, therefore it must be Spirit or nothing that gave Beginning to Things, and consequently this thing Spirit is not only a consistent Notion, but a necessary Reality, and God is that Spirit.

Besides, to convince you of this the more effectually, let me mind you of what, I think, I have heretofore observed, *viz.* That we find in our selves something which not only moves and acts our Bodies, but also sometimes bears hard against them, crosses and controls them in their

*The usefulness of
acknowledging God
to be a Spiritual
Substance.*

Interests and Inclinations. Now surely that which doth so, must needs be something of an higher and different nature from them, and is no other than that kind of Spiritual Being which we call a Soul; and so you have another and more obvious Evidence of the actual existence of a Spiritual Substance.

Bioph. I apprehend you; but, I pray, excuse me one Question more on this Point, and that is, What is the importance of this to Religion? Or of what influence will the acknowledgment of God to be a Spirit have upon the ruling and directing

directing a Man in his Devotions towards him?

Sebast. The belief that God is a Spirit is of very great consequence to Religion upon several accounts.

Partly as it obliges us to be very sincere, hearty and inward in all our Devotions to him, and not think to put him off with Out-sides and Complements: for seeing *he is a Spirit, he will be worshipped in Spirit and Truth*, John, 4. 24.

Partly also as it renders it evident to us, that neither the sound of Words, nor any peculiar Posture, Ceremony, or other such like childish Trifles can of themselves be acceptable to him who is a great and a wise Spirit, no nor yet the Fat of Beasts, nor the Odours of sweet Incense, nor Gold, nor Silver, nor any of those things that are admired among Men; but least of all such sensual and lascivious Rites as were in use amongst the Pagans: for as none of the former can be suitable Oblations to such a pure Being; so it is certain those last named can only besit an impure Spirit, such an one as the Devil is.

But principally, as it convinces us of the Vanity and Impiety of making Images of God, or of thinking to do honour to him by the use of them in his Worship, since he being a Spiritual Substance can by no means be represented by them, but must needs be debased and rendred much meaner to our thoughts than he is by such Representations; and therefore we find, that not only the Holy Scripture in the Books both of the Old and New Testament, utterly condemns such usages as Idolatrous and Abominable to him; but we may also observe that amongst the Pagans themselves, all those who arrived at this

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notion,

notion, that God was a Spirit, rejected Image-Worship, and thought that of the Mind and Spirit to be only acceptable to him.

To all which add, That the belief of the Spiritual Nature of God enables us more easily to conceive of the greatness of his Power, and that it is easie to him to mind and govern the World without trouble or weariness to himself, and with the greater advantage to us. For it is not imaginable that a perfectly immaterial Substance should be sensible of any lassitude or decay; and thus the belief of God's being a Spirit, confirms our trust in his Divine Providence which is the prime Spring and Motive of Devotion.

Bioph. I am abundantly satisfied that God is a Spirit, and that he ought to be so acknowledged. Now proceed, in the next place, to tell me what you mean when you say he is *Eternal*.

Of God's Eternity, and the necessity of acknowledging it.

Sebast. By God's being an *Eternal Spirit*, I mean, that as he had no Beginning, so he can have no end of his Being, and that because (as I shewed you) he is necessarily, or could not but be; for we agreed even now that such an excellency of Being must be allowed to something or other, or else nothing could not have been at all, and I made it plain, that it could not be attributed to the World, or any part of it, and therefore must be due to God.

Bioph. I see I might have saved you the trouble of that Question, yet you will excuse it, since it leads me to another, which I cannot so well resolve without your help, *viz.* of what moment is it to Religion whether God be acknowledged to be *Eternal* or not? Se-

Sebast. Oh! Of very great moment; for, in the first place, this being acknowledged, we are thereby assured that all the inferiour Gods of the Gentiles, or whatsoever were either supposed to be born, or to have a beginning, or to die, or decline in Power and Divinity, could not be Gods, but the Idols of foolish and deluded Men; and at the same time we are as certain that the true God can neither do, nor be capable of any hurt or detriment, no nor of any change, but ever remains immutably the same. For whatsoever is liable to change, may also cease to be.

Again, Upon the Consideration of God's Eternity depends a great Obligation to Religion, forasmuch as by this means he hath it always in his power to reward or punish Men according to their Demerit, wherein consists a great Secret of his Providence, namely, the reason of his Patience and Long-suffering, that he doth not presently execute vengeance upon wicked Men, nor, on the other side, immediately deliver good Men out of the troubles and injuries they meet with in this World, because he hath it always in his power to do it, and if he do it not in this World, will be sure to do it in the next.

To both which may be added, That although the Notion of Eternity of time to come be a great deep into which we cannot look without Giddiness and Disturbance, yet we may be certain there is such a thing, because we are sure that God cannot cease to be, no more than he began to be; and therefore the solicitude which is in Men about what is to come after their deaths, is not the effect of timidity and weakness (as you sometime suspected) but a rational and

well-grounded Prudence, as I then told you.

Bioph. But yet there is one very difficult thing remains to be explained, namely, what do you mean when you say God is an *Infinite Spirit*?

God's Infinity explained, and the use of believing it.

Sebast. By that I mean, that whereas all other Beings (as well *Spiritual* as *Material*) which are not necessarily, or which might not have been, must consequently, whensoever they come into Being, depend upon him, who hath Being in himself, and so be limited and circumscribed by him; that is, they can have but only such a certain Portion of Power, Life and Understanding as he hath allotted them: on the contrary, he that was before all things, and the cause of all things, and who could not but be, must needs be unlimited in all kind of Perfections, forasmuch as there was nothing before him to limit him, nothing equal to him to rival him, nothing after him to intrench upon him, and consequently all conceivable Perfection must be essentially in him; that is, he must be most powerful, most wise, most just and most good, &c.

Bioph. I think I need not ask you of what importance this last point is to Religion, for (as dull as I am) I am aware that this Attribute of the Deity renders him the Object of our Admiration, Fear, Trust, and all other instances of Devotion.

Sebast. It is very true, *Biophilus*; and besides, by virtue of this Infinity he can be present to all places to take notice of all Passages; he can easily accomplish whatsoever he promises or threatens, he can be straitned in nothing, nor need any thing, having all things, in himself, and consequently

quently of that, it is impossible to conceive of him as a stingy, narrow-hearted Being that can envy or malign his Creatures, but contrariwise, he must be unspeakably good, and take delight in nothing more than in communicating of his own fulness to them.

But that which I would especially remark, is this, That a Being, infinite in Goodness, Wisdom, &c. as aforesaid, can never be the Author of absurd, or harsh and impossible Laws; for any such would be a contradiction to the aforementioned Perfections of his Nature: and therefore as we have upon this account great Obligations to serve him chearfully; so we may assure our selves that whatsoever pretends to be a Divine Law, and can be made appear to be inhumanely rigorous, or intolerably difficult to be observed, is either no Law of his, or at the least it is not rightly interpreted.

And thus, I hope, I have in some measure explained to you the Nature of God, and also led you to observe the main stroaks of Piety or the Laws of Natural Religion towards him, deducible from those Principles: and you your self by attentive Consideration, may be able to deduce many others of like Nature. What other service do you now command me?

Bioph. After hearty thanks, good *Sebastian*, for the mild and candid treatment you have given me all along, which together with that clearness of reason which shines out in your Discourse, have made me perfectly yours, I would in the next place request of you (if I be not too importunately troublesome) that you will in like manner discourse to me of the Divine

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Will,

Will as you have done of this Nature; that so I may be more fully instructed in this great business.

Sebast. I shall never think it troublesome, or unseasonable to serve you in such an affair as this; but, *Biophilus*, if we should go no farther, and that I had nothing to say concerning Divine Revelation, yet you see we have enough already to render Religion not only worthy of a Prudent Man's care, but to be the most reasonable and necessary thing in the whole World: so that Atheism with all its boasts of Wit and extraordinary Sagacity, and Scepticism too with all its Caution and Reservedness, are quite beaten out of the Field.

Bioph. I acknowledge it, good *Sebastian*, with Glory to God, and shame enough to my self-----

Sebast. God be thanked for this gentle Thaw, and the prospect we have of a fruitful Season after the cold Weather.

Bioph. I observe no change in the Air; but however, good *Sebastian*, let not the thoughts of that divert you from what we were upon.

Sebast. Never fear it, Sir, I am mindful of you, and glad to see you so earnestly inquisitive after that you was so cold towards, and so incurious of heretofore. But what was you about to say?

*Concerning the
knowledge of the
Divine Will.*

Bioph. I remember you said that humane reason was too short to be a Standard for God Almighty, and that if it was possible for us perfectly to understand the Divine Nature (which we cannot) yet since he is a free Agent

Agent, and hath a Mind of his own, and will not be prescribed to by us, it is necessary in order to the pleasing and Propitiating him towards our selves, that we should some way or other be more particularly instructed concerning his Will and Pleasure: now therefore my desire is (if it be possible) to be ascertained of the Divine Will, that I may know how to carry my self agreeably thereunto.

Sebast. It is a worthy Resolution of yours, and a very noble inquiry that hath taken rise from thence, and let Me add, it is such an inquiry as you may justly expect Satisfaction in: for since natural reason and industry cannot give us sufficient light in the case, it is not consistent with the Divine Goodness to leave Men destitute of some certain way of Information, what he requires and expects from them: And that it is possible for God to supply that defect of our understanding, there can be no doubt, since it cannot be imagined that Almighty Power and Wisdom should ever want means to express his Sense to the Sons of Men, or to assure them that such is indeed his Mind without all danger of Imposture or Delusion.

Bioph. But what I now understand of the Divine Nature, I cannot but grant it very possible for God to do so; and I insist upon the fitness and reasonableness that some such thing should be done: but I inquire where is it done, and how may a Man have recourse to it?

Sebast. First let me ask you what ways are there imaginable that might give you or any other Man Satisfaction in this case; and what are those you could think fit for God to make use of to this purpose?

*Several ways of
Divine Revelati-
on.*

Bioph. I could think of several ways whereby God might, if he please, make known his Mind to Men; namely, I doubt not but he can, if he will, speak from Heaven in an audible Voice, so that we shall hear him as we hear one another; or if he thought good to condescend so far, he could personally appear in the World, and instruct Men in what he requires of them; again, he could singly apply himself to particular Persons, and by some secret Operations of his, instill his Mind into their Hearts; or to name no more, he could guide the thoughts and hands of some certain Men whilst they committed his Will to Writing, which should be a Record and Digest of the Divine Laws to all Ages of the World.

Sebast. Very good: Then I hope it will abundantly satisfy you, if I shew you that God hath not only made use of some one or other of these ways you mention, but hath by all and every one of them notified his pleasure at some time or other to the Sons of Men.

As for instance, In the first Ages of the World before there were any Divine Laws settled for the conduct of Mens Lives, it was not unusual with the Divine Majesty to give particular intimations of his Mind, especially in such cases as the use of natural Reason could not extend to; and those that were extraordinary good Men, had very frequent experience of this in those ancient times, and even the better sort of Heathens were not destitute of such special discoveries of God's Will (amongst other occasions to supply the defects of Humane Reason in
Divine

Divine things) and there is nothing more known and acknowledged amongst them than this.

And then it is also certain, that though God as a Spirit hath properly no Voice of his own, yet he hath several times framed a Voice, and caused it to be heard from Heaven as his, the famous instance whereof was at the giving of Laws to the Jewish Nation from Mount *Sinai*, nor have later times (no not amongst the Pagans themselves) been altogether left, without such prodigious discoveries of the Divine Will, unless we call in Question the credit of all their Writings.

But for God's condescending to come himself into the World, and to instruct Men in such things as are agreeable to his Will, this was most gloriously verified in the Conversation of our Saviour Christ Jesus in Humane Nature upon Earth, who had all the Attestations to his Divinity that could be desired, both in the Wonders of his Birth, the Miracles of his Life, and the Glories of his Resurrection, but especially in the frequent and humble Ministry of Angels to him as occasion served. And he familiarly and fully interpreted the Mind of God to Men; and the more to awaken the Attention of Mankind to him, a Voice from Heaven also attended his entrance on this Office, *Matthew*, 3. 17.

And then in the last place, for God's declaring his Mind to us by the Ministry of Men, this he hath abundantly done in the Books of Holy Scripture, which as they were dictated by himself to those Holy Men that composed them, so they have been carefully preserved by his

his special Providence from the changes and corruption that all Humane things are liable to, that so they might convey his Pleasure to all Persons, Climates and Ages of the World.

Bioph. But do you mean that a Man may consult which of these Oracles and when he pleases, for a Resolution in any Matter of difficulty that occurs in the business of Religion.

Sebast. No indeed, *Biophilus*, that you must not expect, but must content your self only with the last of the four, namely, the Holy Scripture, that is the standing and *lively Oracle of God*, and *more sure than a Voice from Heaven*, Heb. 5. 12. 2 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

Bioph. But may I not ask, why might not some of those other Declarations of the Divine Mind have been continued as well as that of the Scripture, especially either a Voice from Heaven, or some immediate impress of God Almighty upon the Minds of Men, if it had been but for the Attestation to, and fuller Confirmation of the Bible, and the written way of Divine Revelation?

Sebast. Nay, *Biophilus*, we must not ask God a reason of that, but be thankful to him for what he hath afforded us, especially since that is as much as is necessary for our guidance; for those that *hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they hear if one rose from the Dead*, Luke 16. 31. much less if they heard a Voice from Heaven.

*The reason of the
surcease of Voices
from Heaven and
special Oracles.*

Nevertheless I must tell you, I do not think it altogether impossible to give a modest man more particular satisfacti-

on in this case, for there were apparently special reasons why God should make such special and prodigious discoveries of himself in former times as he doth not make now-a-days, namely, because for a good part of the Age of the World there was no written Law, and so God must apply himself to Men in some extraordinary way, or they would have had no Instruction in his Will at all. And then after that the Law was given by a Voice from Heaven on Mount *Sinai*, and written on Tables of Stone, it was in it self so imperfect a draught of the Divine Mind, and for the most part so accommodated to the weakness of that People, and to the infancy of the World, that it would have been hard to have kept a Man of any sagacity in a constant belief of it as coming from God, if he had not continually and from time to time made prodigious Attestations to it: But now especially since our Saviour came into the World, and we have the Books of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, there is so full a Declaration of the Divine Mind, and that not in Types and Figures neither, but in so plain a way, and with so much agreeableness of the things discovered to the Reason of Mankind; that there is no need of any secondary Attestation, nor any thing more than that it appears that those Writings were indited by God.

Besides, it is to be considered that the way of giving Answer by a Voice from Heaven, unless it had been granted to every Man (and then it must have been done almost every day and hour, and in every part of the World also) could not have given better satisfaction to the generality
of

of Men (I mean to such as were not Ear-witnesses of such a Voice) than this way of Scripture doth: for without infinite and continual Miracles, it must have been their lot and duty to believe without hearing such a Voice.

And for that other way of *secret intimation* of God's Mind to the Minds of Men by a private and particular Oracle, it is plain that it could go no farther than to satisfy that particular Person to whom such answer was given; and therefore was only fit to be made use of in extraordinary cases, and upon some extraordinary Persons, and even then there was need of some Miracle to attend such intimations, in order to the securing the Minds of such Men from the delusions of the Devil, or their own Fancies: and when that was done, this discovery could go no farther than the Person to whom it was particularly made; for it *was like the white stone which no man knew but he that received it*, Rev. 2. 17. The rest of Mankind could have no other advantage by it, nor be better secured of the Oracle, than we are of what we learn by the Holy Scripture, no nor so well neither, as you will see by and by, if you please.

Bioph. With all my Heart, for that is the very point I desire to be resolved in; but in order thereto, first, let me intreat you to explain what you mean by this way of Divine Legislation, or this way of delivering the Will of God by the Writings of the Holy Scripture.

What is meant by God's inditing the Holy Scripture, and the reasonableness of it.

Sebast. The way is this: Divine Wisdom resolving to give a standing Law and Guide to Mankind, in the first place, inspired

inspired certain Holy Men, that is, made clear Impressions of his own Sentiments upon their Minds, and then also guided and governed them in the writing and publishing the aforesaid Impressions for the use of others.

That it is easie for God Almighty to imprint his own sense upon the Minds of such Men as he shall chuse for that purpose, you cannot doubt when you consider that Power of his which he displayed in the Creation, and that therefore the Minds of Men must needs be *in his hands as clay in the hands of the potters*, so that he can mould and figure them as he pleases.

That he can give assurance to the Minds of such Men, that it is he himself that makes those Impressions upon them, and no other Agent, you have acknowledged already; and there can be no more cause to doubt it, than you have, whether it be I that speak to you or a Spirit out of the Wall: for certainly God hath ways enough to distinguish himself and his Motions from Illusions.

That also he should be able to guide and govern those Holy Pen-men in the writing of what he himself had put into their Minds, and in delivering his sense so fully and clearly as to answer his end, and become a sufficient Rule for Men to govern themselves by, must be granted, or you make him more impotent than a Man.

Lastly, That he could by his Providence preserve the Books so written from being imbezell'd or corrupted, that so they may answer the ends aforesaid, cannot be denied without denying his Providence,

The Holy Scripture is the supply of the defects of Natural Reason.

Providence, and subverting the Foundation of Religion.

So that in summ, this way of the Holy Scripture must needs be a very sufficient way of Divine Legislation, and abundant supply of the Defects of Natural reason in Divine Things.

Bioph. I grant all you have hitherto said, which amounts to no more but this, That it is not impossible for God to do so; but now the Question is, How shall it appear that (*de facto*) he hath done? or (which amounts to the same thing) how do you prove that those Books (commonly call'd the Bible) are indeed what they pretend to be?

Sebast. There lies the pinch of the business indeed, as you well observe; and therefore, in order to your full satisfaction in that point, let me desire you to lay together the four following Particulars.

The proof of the Divine Authority of the Books of Holy Scripture.

First, it cannot be denied but that the Books of Holy Scripture are (at least generally speaking) the most Ancient Monuments in the whole World. Wherefore, besides the Veneration which we commonly allow to Antiquity, it is apparent that they have endured the Test of all times past, and that all the Wit of Man hath not been able hitherto to find any considerable flaw in them, and consequently their Authority and Credibility is so much greater than any other Books, by how much the time is longer since they were written and published; for there have not been wanting those that have endeavoured to expose them, and if they had been able

able to have done it, doubtless long ere this time, these Books had lost all their Veneration: But since they still retain their Dignity and Esteem (notwithstanding all efforts of their Enemies to the contrary) there is ground enough to beleive they never shall be able to do it, and consequently that there can be no reasonable Suspicion of the truth of them.

To which may be added, That since Divine Providence hath also so long preserved and watched over these Writings, it is very natural to collect that therefore they are such as he peculiarly owns and recommends to us.

Secondly, It is to be considered that the Doctrine of these Books is perfectly agreeable to the natural Notions we have of God, and therefore being fit for him to be the Author of, they must consequently be fit for us to entertain, as coming from him, at least upon reasonable Evidence of fact that they did so.

If indeed any Man could justly charge these Writings as containing any thing absurd or impossible, or make appear that they countenanced such things as are disagreeable to what we naturally know of God, or can discern to be in him by the best improvement of our Understanding: Then (as I have granted before) we could not be bound to beleive them, although they should be supposed to have all the Confirmation imaginable; for no Man can believe what he will, nor be obliged to act contrary to the natural Sense and Principles of his Mind, upon any Authority whatsoever.

But whensoever a Doctrine is propounded that is reasonable in it self, and besides hath reasonable

sonable evidence that it came from God, and is part of his revealed Will, then it is highly reasonable that we should receive it as such, notwithstanding some trifling Objections which may be to the contrary.

Thirdly, It is especially to be minded that the Doctrine of the Holy Scripture hath not wanted such special assurances that it came from God, as were fit for him to give, or for Men to expect. For all those Holy Men that delivered any part of it to the World, were abetted by Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of what they so delivered: so that either God Almighty must be supposed to set the Seal of his Omnipotency to a Falshood, or else these Doctrines are the discoveries of the Mind of God.

Now that there was such miraculous proof, we may be assured in the general by this Consideration, that it is not imaginable that such Doctrine and such Books should have obtained that credit in the times when they were set on foot, without such Confirmation, especially since the matter of those Writings in a great part was so very different from the Notions, and Practices, and Interests of those Ages and Persons to whom they were published. “ Inſo-
“ much that (as a great Man ſaid of old) “ to
“ ſuppoſe the World to be brought to the re-
“ ception of theſe Doctrines without a Miracle,
“ might juſtly ſeem the greateſt Miracle that e-
“ ver was.

And in particular, that the Books of the Old Testament had ſuch Divine Atteſtation, the very Books themſelves frequently appeal to, or at leaſt give us the Hiſtory of ſuch things of this
kind

kind as could neither be withstood and denied by the Men of the present Age when they were done, nor confuted by those that came after; besides the famous Spirit of Prophecy, which displayed it self all along those times (of which more by and by.)

And then for the New Testament, besides all the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, that one of his Resurrection was a thing both so notorious to be observed, and so easie to have been confuted if it had been false, that there is no colour of reason to doubt of it, and consequently none to doubt of his Doctrine: and then in the Apostles times, that miraculous ability of speaking with all kind of Tongues, which was suddenly bestowed upon the Christians on the famous days of *Pentecost*, *Act. c. 2. v. i.* was a thing equally stupendious in it self; and irrefragable in its Evidence of the Christian Religion.

Now I have shewed you before, that whatsoever point hath been once sufficiently proved, it must be true for ever, and there can be no reason to expect after-Miracles for Confirmation of it.

Lastly, It is observable that the several parts of Holy Scripture, I mean the Books of the Old and New Testament, (as they are usually distinguished) do, like a pair of Indentures, justify one another, and assure us that there can be no fraud nor forgery in either of them; for besides that, they bearing witness to one another, one of them cannot be false, unless the other be so too; and if either of them be proved by Articles, the other would be fully assured by
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the same means, although it had no Miracles peculiar to it self.

Besides this, I say, it is in the first place, certain that these several Books, or Parts of Holy Scripture were written and published in several Ages of the World which were very remote from each other, and consequently by such Men as could possibly hold no correspondence or confederacy with each other.

And then again, secondly, it is as plain also that (for instance) the Old Testament foretels, many Ages before, what things should come to pass many Ages after; wherefore if those things come to pass accordingly, there can be no doubt but God inspired those Men that prophesied those things: and if the New Testament, on the other side, contain a Relation of such Events as fully answer to those Predictions, then are both of them most certainly true.

And now laying these four things together, and only setting aside the demand of present and daily Miracles, which I have shewed to be unreasonable to expect, I pray tell me, *Biophilus*, what farther evidence can any ingenious Man require in such a case as this is?

Bioph. To speak the truth from my Heart, I cannot tell.

Sebast. Why then I hope, *Biophilus*, you think your self now concerned in those sacred Records, and for the time to come will make them a principal part of your study, especially the New Testament.

Bioph. I plainly see I ought to do so; but why do you lay the Emphasis especially on the New Testament?

Sebast.

Sebast. For no less reason than because that part of Holy Scripture contains the clearest and fullest discovery of the Mind of God, as being the ultimate and most perfect Declaration of himself, made by the very Son of God in humane Nature.

Bioph. I am hitherto an utter stranger to the Contents of those Books; (to my shame be it spoken) I pray therefore, give me in short the Sum of them.

Sebast. Nay, for that you must excuse me, and let me by all means advise you to study the Books themselves, they are easie to be had, and I can assure you, you will receive greater Satisfaction, and profit more by that course than by any Epitome I can make of them.

*The Sum of the
New Testament.*

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebastian*, it is not my Intention to decline the reading of the New Testament, but you perceive I have lost too much time already, therefore let me again request you to give me (at least) a compendious view of the principal things contained in these Writings.

Sebast. Since you will have it so, I comply with your desires, and as far as I can comprehend so great and weighty a Subject, and so full a Writing in my Mind, I must tell you, *The New Testament* principally consists of these three things.

First, an exact and excellent Rule of Holy Living, by conforming our selves to which, we shall most certainly please God, and most effectually procure his Favour.

Secondly, The most powerful and effectual motives to provoke us to an uniform and thorough

rough Compliance with the aforesaid Rule.

Thirdly, The most proper means and assistances to that end, that so we may not only be encouraged to undertake, but inabled to accomplish that holy course which is propounded and prescribed.

This (I take it) is a Summary of the whole Gospel, at least (as I said) the principal Contents of it.

For by the first of these Particulars we have a Law given us to guide our Consciences, and a generous Model or Design of raising and improving the state of Mankind.

By the second our Affections are inflamed, and our endeavours encouraged proportionably to the design aforesaid, and by the last particular our infirmities are relieved, and we are assured of attaining that glorious Design if we be not wanting to our selves.

Bioph. I wonder in my heart what made you so unwilling to gratifie this request of mine; by this little glimpse which you have now afforded me, I see plainly that those Books contain a very admirable Institution, unless it be that you have some strange Art in representing things, and raising ones Opinion.

Sebast. No, assure your self, *Biophilus*, there is no art in the case, but the mere excellency of Christianity appearing in its genuine Colours, as you will be more thoroughly convinced when you have studied it well, and especially have made experiment of it in practice.

Bioph. As cold and diffident as my temper hath been hitherto, I am now on the sudden inflamed, and I am inamoured on this Idea of Religion

Religion you speak of: pray therefore explain these things more fully to me; and first

The peculiar Laws of the Christian Religion.

I desire to know more particularly what the peculiar Laws and Rules of this Institution are.

Sebast. For that, *Biophilus*, you must know, that this Institution of the Gospel being (as I said) the last and ultimate Revelation of the Divine Will, must consequently be more exact and perfect than any other; yet notwithstanding it is not destructive, but only perfective of those that went before it: and therefore, as it contradicts no former Prophecy or Revelation of God's Will; so it repeals no Law of Nature or Reason, derogates from no Rule of Piety, Gratitude, Civility, or Humanity, but only adds to them and improves them; for so our Saviour himself hath told us, *He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them, Mat. 5. 17.* So that indeed the Christian Institution is a pandect or digest of all that is *grave, decent, prudent, vertuous, or praise-worthy, Phil. 4. 8.* all which things it not only re-inforces by more powerful Arguments (as I will shew you by and by) but requires every of them in greater Perfection. But now the Supplement or Addition it makes to all those, is that which is to be called the peculiar Character of this Religion, and that, I think, may be reduced to these three Heads.

First, It enjoins a more excellent and spiritual Worship of God.

Secondly, A more refined Purity of Heart and Life.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, A more noble, generous, and diffusive Charity.

1. The Gospel prescribes a more Spiritual Worship than was in use in the World before; for our Saviour expressly affirms, *The time now comes when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and truth*, and gives the reason, *because God is a Spirit*, &c. *Joh. 4 23, 24.* It

*More Spiritual
Worship peculiarly
required by the
Gospel.*

is true, God ever was a Spirit, and it is impossible he should ever have been otherwise (as I have shewn you before) but his Spiritual Nature was not so well understood heretofore, whilst he was wont to represent himself by Fire, or in humane shape amongst Men: and whilst he required to have a Temple built for his residence, as if he required an external state of Grandeur or bodily accommodation; and lastly, whilst he required Sacrifices and Oblations to be made to him of such things as are of value amongst Men, as if he was a necessitous Deity, and used to eat and drink as his Worshippers do. But now, since he hath given proof of his mighty Majesty, without those visible appearances, and the Sons of Men are better instructed that he is a pure Spirit without all mixture of Matter, and infinitely full, perfect, and happy in himself, without any accession of other things to him: Henceforth he will not be worshipped with the steams of Blood and Fat, nor pleased with clouds of Incense, but with hearty Adorations, with raised Affections, with the Contemplations of pure Minds, with inward Reverence and Admiration of him, with devout Prayers and Praises offered

offer'd to him; with Love, with Trust, and Confidence in him, and endeavours of conforming our selves to him: This is the Worship that is suitable to a good, and happy, and a spiritual Being; yet not excluding bodily Expressions of Reverence neither, but as principally requiring the former, and making this latter only the necessary and effect of that.

2. The Gospel requires a more refined temper of Heart and Life than was usually practised, or easie to be arrived at before; namely, it prescribes to our inward Man as well as our outward Actions, and that our Hearts be pure as well as our bodily Members; that our Reason have the Mastery of our Lusts and Passions, so that we neither indulge our Sensuality in the intemperate use of Pleasure, nor live as if we were born to eat and drink, but be in some measure above the gusto and relish of bodily Entertainments; that we subdue our Passions and Inclinations to Anger and Revenge, and soar above the Tempest of this World, so as to despise the usual Cares, and Fears, and Solitudes of the present Life, and enjoy our selves in a kind of Divine Tranquility and Security.

Purity of Heart is another great and peculiar Law of Christianity.

The generality of Mankind, both Jews and Pagans, thought it a mighty felicity to hoard up Riches, to grasp Civil Power, a ravishing thing to swim in sensual Pleasures; and nothing was counted either more sweet or more brave than to revenge a man's self when he thought he was affronted: but as the Glory of all these things is faded by the Light of the Gospel, so the de-

fires of them are to be mortified by the Laws of Christianity ; the Mind is to be freed of these fordid Entertainments, and to be taken up with more pure and spiritual Delights, with intellectual Pleasures, with the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, with the Glory of Conquest (not over other Men, but) over our selves, our brutal Lusts, with the Joys of God's Favour, and the Peace of our own Conscience.

Universal Charity another peculiar Law of the Christian Religion.

3. And Lastly, This Religion requires a larger Spirit, and a more noble and diffusive Charity than agrees with the common Standard of the World, or than was prescribed by any other Religion. The Charity of a Pagan commonly extended no farther than his Family and Friends, or at most to his own City and Country ; and that of the Jews to their own Nation and Religion only : but to love their Enemies, was by both of them look'd upon as so far from necessary, that it was thought impossible and absurd. Whereas this Institution requires us to love our very Enemies, and those that mortally hate us ; to render Good for Evil ; to embrace all the World in our Affections ; to look upon all Mankind as our Brethren, the Children of one common Parent ; that there be no Men so silly or peevish, so mean and contemptible, or so remote from us in Blood, Country, Manners, or Opinion, but we be ready to do all good Offices towards them ; to oblige them by kindness ; and to conquer and over-power them by real instances of Good-will and endearing Carriage. This (as I take it) is the Sum of the Christian Law, and

and the peculiar Character of that Religion, at least, so far as concerns the Rule of living.

Bioph. You have thus far, I confess, described a very brave Institution; but sure all this is only matter of Speculation, or at most a draught of some Monastick Order: it is possible perhaps in their retired way of living (where they are free from the Temptations and Provocations that are incident to other Men) something at this rate may be pretended to, or at least dreamed of, but sure these Laws are too strict to be practicable, or indeed possible to the generality of Mankind; and then, according to your own Rule, they cannot come from God, who must be supposed so wise as to know what Men are capable of performing, and to be too just to require Impossibilities.

Sebast. You will better judge of that matter by and by, when you have considered the Motives and Assistances this Religion affords, as well as the Rules it prescribes: for you know that things of this nature are difficult or easie in proportion to the Encouragements to undertake and conflict with them. Great Rewards raise great Spirits, and you can never tell what any Man will come to, till you understand what Inducements and Motives he shall be acted by: Now by that time you have heard what remains to be said concerning the Christian Religion, I do not doubt but you will pronounce it to be every whit as feasible in Practice as noble in Speculation.

Bioph. You say right; for God's sake therefore go on, and in the next place repre-

The peculiar Motives or Encouragements of the Gospel.

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sent to me the inducements the Gospel affords a Man to live at such a rate as you have spoken of.

Sebast. Why then, the second thing remarkable in the Gospel is, the powerful Motives it makes use of to provoke Men to an uniform compliance with its Laws, and they are especially these three.

First, It charms Men by a lively draught of the Divine Goodness.

Secondly, It provokes them by the Example of our Saviour.

Thirdly, It inflames them by the promise of Eternal Life.

The first Motive is the Divine Goodness lively and powerfully set forth in the Gospel.

1. The Gospel makes so lively a Representation of the Divine Goodness and Clemency, especially in the free Pardon and total Abolition of all Sin past (upon Condition of a generous Piety and Vertue for the time to come) that it powerfully works upon Mens ingenuity, and melts them into a compliance with the most difficult terms that such Goodness can be capable of propounding to them and requiring of them. Do but think with your self, if you had so far offended your Prince and violated the Laws of your Country, that Majesty was exasperated, and Justice armed with severity against you, so that you was under a terrible Sentence, and expected a speedy Execution; now in this case if notwithstanding your Prince should condescend to make you an offer of Pardon and full Restitution to your former Capacity, upon certain terms; Would not you (I say) be willing to enter

enter upon a very difficult Service, and undertake the most hazardous Enterprize? Would you then be nice and captious, or stand carping and capitulating? Nay, would you not be inflamed with Resolution, spirited by Gratitude, and find your self to become more than your self, in such an Undertaking?

Now this is the case, *Biophilus*: we have infinitely offended Almighty God in the whole course of our Lives, and so are justly fall'n under his Displeasure, insomuch that a Sentence of Eternal Death is pass'd against us? Notwithstanding, in the Gospel an Overture of Reconciliation is made, and upon those terms I mentioned even now, he offers to receive us into Favour, that all our Sins, how many and great soever, shall be blotted out, and never come in remembrance again; the Sentence shall be revoked; we shall never be upbraided with our Follies; no cloud shall hang over us; no ill Character be upon us; but our Consciences shall be quiet, and God Almighty will everlastingly shine upon us. Now can any Man in this case expostulate the terms with God Almighty? Can he find in his heart to complain of the trouble of his Service, the difficulty of a Self-denial, or think it hard to be obliged to forgive other Men upon condition of God's forgiving him? No surely: he will heartily embrace the Propositions; he will love and thank God with all his Soul, and rejoyce in difficulty it self, that he may give proof of his Gratitude, and be only sorry that he can give no better evidence of it: in a word, he will be inflamed in his Resolutions, and winged in his endeavours of serving
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and pleasing such a God: *a God of Mercy, rich in Mercy and Goodness, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin*; forgiving old and great and the most disingenuous Sinners.

Bioph. Oh! *Sebastian*, you break my Heart: enough, enough; I cannot forbear ----

*The Example of
our Saviour another
Gospel-motive.*

Sebast. The second Motive of the Gospel is the Example of our Saviour himself: this it sets before us, and by this it provokes us to compliance with the Laws aforesaid. That he was the very Son of God, *the brightness of his glory, and the express character of his majesty*, Heb. 1. 2. I have intimated before, and all the miraculous Glories of his Birth, Life, Resurrection, and Ascension to Heaven, have abundantly demonstrated it: now that *He* should come down from Heaven to Earth, and there frame himself to an exact conformity to the aforesaid Laws of the Gospel, is not a greater instance of his admirable Self-humiliation, than of the incomparable Excellency, Wisdom, and Goodness of those Laws, in that they are such as God himself thought fit to be subject to them himself, as well as to recommend them to us.

For now certainly no Man can be so prodigiously absurd, as to account it a mean drudgery to be conversant in that way of worshipping God which the Gospel teaches, seeing Christ Jesus himself made it not only his business but his delight.

No Man surely can think himself hardly used, if he be a little restrained in the use of bodily Pleasures, since the Son of God, when he

was

was in humane Flesh, disdained them.

No Man can be so fond as to admire Riches, and Honours, and the Preferments of this World, which our Saviour could have had in the greatest measure that is imaginable, if he had not despised them : no Man can be so madly passionate, as to think that to revenge himself is a great point of Glory, and that it is unmanly to omit it, when he observes the Son of God, who could have done it effectually, instead thereof, only praying for his Enemies : nor can any man be so mean-spirited as either to be vainly puffed up with Prosperity, or sink under Adversity, Reproach, or the deepest Contempt imaginable, that sees the Son of God to be the poorest, meanest, and most ignominiously treated of all Men.

Besides, it is farther considered that there is no colour for any Man to pretend an impossibility of the thing, or impotency in himself to perform any of the forementioned, or any other duty of Christianity, since our Saviour performed them all in humane Nature, wherein he was subject to the same infirmities, assaulted with the same temptations, and pressed with the same necessities that we are ; he had the same Flesh and Blood, felt the same pains, was hungry, thirsty and weary, as we are, and so there is no excuse to be made in our case that would not have been as reasonable in his.

Now all this considered (together with the mighty power of Example in general, as that it takes away the pretence of Ignorance, baffles the Plea of Impotency, shames Cowardice, and kindles Emulation) cannot but have the force
of

of a mighty Motive, and prevail upon all ingenuous Persons *to cast away every weight and the sin that besets them, and to run with Patience and Courage the Race set before them,* Heb. 12. 1.

The promise of eternal life the principal Motive of the Gospel.

3. But the third and most powerful Motive of the Gospel is yet behind, and that is the promise of Eternal Life to all those that frame themselves

by the Rules aforesaid. And that whereas the best that other Men can hope for, is, to rot in their Graves, and everlastingly to be forgotten (but that will not serve their turn, for they shall certainly suffer the vengeance of Eternal Fire;) Those, on the contrary, that live by the Laws of the Gospel, shall be raised again out of the Dust, and out-live the very Heavens in unspeakable and endless Felicity.

That this is not a Dream, but a real Truth, you may be thus assured. First, For the possibility of it, because I have shewed you already that God is a necessary Being, and must live for ever; and therefore he that had it in his power to make things out of nothing, cannot want ability to preserve such things in being as it pleaseth him. And then, Secondly, that he will do so, is the great promise of the Gospel, which he delivered by his own Son, and *whereof he hath given assurance in that he raised him from the Dead,* Act. 17. 31.

Now, *Biophilus*, this is such a thing, this Living for ever, I say, is such a Motive, that it is able to make a Man to despise all difficulty so far as even to be inflamed the more by the apprehension of it, and to stick at nothing but that impossibility;

impossibility; but never any Man yet had the folly to object that in the case: it may be said to be difficult to maintain a constant attendance upon God's Worship, a little uneasy to deny our present delight and pleasure, something against the Grain to stifle our passions, and to lay aside revenge; but never any body said or thought any of them to be absolutely impossible.

For it is plain in experience, that many Men have undergone greater hardships, than any are required in the Gospel, either to demonstrate their Love, or to pursue their Passion; in compliance with their Fears, or for the sake of their Interests; sometimes out of Flattery, and sometimes out of meer Reverence of some Person; but at any time for self-security and preservation: Now whatsoever may be done upon those inconsiderable grounds, most certainly cannot be impossible to be done when Eternal Life is at stake: and this being, as I have said, plainly propounded in the Gospel as the great Wager to him that runs that Race, and with all being impossible to be obtained upon any other terms, must needs make *the Yoke of Christ* seem (at least comparatively) *easy*, and *his Burthen light*, Matt. II. 30. And so much for the second principal point of Christianity.

Bioph. Now, *Sebastian*, you have increased my wonder more than ever, though, I must confess, you have translated it to another subject; forasmuch as whereas I suspected before the possibility of complying with those strict Laws of the Gospel, now I am as much amazed that any body should complain of difficulty in them, those things considered which you have last represented.

Sebast.

Sebast. God be thanked for that change, *Biophilus*, but your wonder of the second sort will be yet heightned, when you consider also the assistances that the Gospel affords us towards the performance of what it requires, which is the third and last of those things whereby I designed to represent the sum of it to you; and (to be short) that consists principally in these two things.

The Assistances and Helps which the Gospel affords towards the performing of its Laws. First, the co-operation of the Holy Spirit.

1. The inward assistance and co-operation of God's Holy Spirit.

2. The outward advantages of the Society of his Church.

First, He that by his Son hath required such things of us as the aforesaid, namely, Spiritual Worship, Purity of Heart, and universal Charity, hath also promised by his Divine Power to co-operate with us in the discharge of them, and then there can be no such thing as impossibility, nor scarcely so much as difficulty in the case: for what is impossible to Almighty Power? Or, what burthen can there be to complain of, when we have such an helper?

But the meaning of this is not, that God will do all for us without us, so as that we shall be only passive, and recipients of his Impressions, as some have very absurdly fancied: for then all the Acts of Piety and Vertue would be more properly God's Acts than ours, and could be capable of no praise or reward as proceeding from us: and besides, this could not be called Divine Assistance, but his Creation rather, since

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in such an exertion of his own Omnipotency, he did wholly over-bear or supersede our endeavours.

But the meaning is this, That whensoever any Man (in Contemplation of the Motives and Incouragements aforesaid) sets himself in earnest to comply with that which God by the Laws of the Gospel hath made to be his duty, from thenceforth he shall not only have the benefit of a common Providence in upholding and strengthening the Powers of his Mind, nor only find the effects of a more especial Providence in removing Obstacles, and making his way easie to him, but by the vital Power and Efficacy of the Divine Spirit his Mind shall be more enlightened to see the excellency of the thing he goes about; his Will shall be confirmed and strengthened in its choice and resolution; his Affections quickned in the pursuit and execution of that choice: and above all, his Heart shall be cheared in the whole enterprize with unspeakable Joy, and many times with an admirable and ravishing prospect of the glory that shall attend and crown his performance.

This our Saviour promised to the Christian Church before he left the World and ascended to Heaven, *viz.* That he would this way be *present with them to the end of the World*, Matth. 28. 20. and hereof he gave a great earnest when on the famous day of *Pentecost* (Acts 2. 1.) the Holy Spirit came in a very prodigious manner upon all the Apostles and Christians that were assembled together as the Representative and Seminary of his future Church; and it was done (amongst other reasons) to give assurance

surance that he was mindful of his promise, and that all Ages after might justly expect the presence of his Spirit with them (though not so visible as in that extraordinary instance) which accordingly good Men at all times find true by comfortable experience.

Bioph. This which you now tell me is the strangest thing that ever I heard of in my Life; if this be true, it will be ridiculous to object difficulty against the Christian Institution, for upon this Supposition it is plain there can be nothing but sottishness or obstinacy, cowardice and credulity, to hinder a Man in observing the Laws of it. But I pray however, proceed in your method, and shew me also, in the next place, what are those external helps and advantages which you intimated?

The second or external assistance of the Gospel, is the advantage of the Society of a Church.

Sebast. The external advantage of this Religion which I especially intended, is the Institution of a Christian Church, that is, the Son of God the Author of this Religion ordered that all those who imbraced it, and became his Disciples, should not content themselves to live singly and separately, as if they were unconcerned one in another, but unite themselves into a Body of Spiritual Polity; and that although they were to be respectively subject to the Civil Governments under which they lived (at least so far as the Laws of Men intrenched not upon those of his Religion) yet they were to be under a stricter tye of Unity amongst themselves, and to become a distinct Corporation under peculiar Officers, as well as for

for peculiar ends and purposes. Nor was this a mere arbitrary or positive Law of his, and to be observed only because he was commanded it, but as it was enjoined with admirable Wisdom on his part, so it was no less of singular advantage to all his Disciples in innumerable respects, some of which I am ingaged to represent to you in particular.

And first, The Constitution of this Society of a Church, was an excellent Expedient for the preserving and holding up of the Doctrine of Christianity in the World, and for the Prevention both of Corruptions and Errors in the Laws, and of mistakes in the great Motives and Incouragements of this Religion. Hence the Church is called by the Apostle *St. Paul, The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. not that the Church properly gives authority to the Doctrine of our Religion, for that it hath immediately from our Saviour himself, and from the Miracles wrought by God to attest it (as I shewed before;) but because the Church was the conversatory of the Books wherein the Doctrine was written, and a witness of the aforesaid proofs made of the Divinity of it, and competent to secure us from imposture, and to preserve and hold forth those sacred Books that contained it as the sum and code of our Religion. Accordingly it is observable, that in the rage of Pagan Persecution in the time of *Dioclesian*, and when the Enemies of this Religion grew to that heighth of Pride and Confidence, as to promise to themselves to root out all memory and re-

The great advantages of Church-Society.

mains of Christianity, the care and zeal of this Society preserved this sacred *depositum* of holy Scripture intire to after Ages, when otherwise private Persons would or might out of fear and weakness have delivered them up to be destroyed.

Again, Secondly, This way of incorporating Christians in the Society of a Church, was a more easie and ready way for the Instruction of the severall Persons of which that Society consisted, and necessary for the publishing, explaining, and inculcating the Doctrine and Laws of their Religion to them. For if our Saviour had appointed Pastours and not a Flock (unless he had made the former as numerous almost as the latter) it had been impossible that they should have instructed all his Disciples: but now he having appointed and obliged them to joyn together in a Body, the same Pastour and the same Labour that instructs one may instruct many. It is in this case as it is with those Creatures that need the assistance, and are fed by the Hand of Man, God hath ordered them by Nature to joyn in Flocks and Herds, that they might be the more capable of Humane Culture, and answer the labour and care Men bestow upon them; whereas wild Beasts, they live singly, and therefore are left to shift for themselves. Now this is a great advantage to all the Disciples of this Religion, that those that cannot read nor study, nor are capable of feeding themselves, by this Society of a Church, God hath provided a way for their constant and easie Instruction by the publick Ministry of his Gospel.

Moreover,

Moreover, Thirdly, By means of such a Society and Officers appointed over it, there is provision made for the Resolution of all Doubts, and for the ease and satisfaction of melancholy and perplexed Consciences, which is a singular advantage of this Institution of a Church. For it is not to be supposed but that there will be a great number of well-meaning Men who may either want parts and ability to judge of several things that may concern them, or may want leisure to consider so maturely as a difficulty may require, or may not be impartial enough in their own case to guide their own Consciences; now for the relief of such as these, it is of great use to be in the Society of a Church where God hath appointed such to be Officers in it *who have the spirit of the Lord upon them to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted and to comfort those that mourn*, *Isai. 61. 1, 2.* such as have made it their business to study the more difficult points of Religion, that they may be able *to speak a word in season to him that fainteth*, *Isa. 50. 4.* and whose Duty and Province it is not so much to make publick Harangues to the Flock, as by particular application to remove Scruples, to solve Difficulties, and provide for Emergencies; and all this they may well be supposed to be able to do with great sincerity and impartiality, as also with great Authority, and being hereunto appointed by God himself, and assisted herein by the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, There is this farther advantage of this Institution of a Church, that the Members of this Society are not only more likely to animate and inflame one another in the ways of

Vertue and Piety by mutual example, but also being concerned in one another, as of the same Body, and for the Honour of their common Faith and Religion, are authorized to watch over one another, to correct the erroneous, to admonish the careless, to reprove the vicious, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the good, and, in a word, are obliged in an extraordinary manner to all Offices of Charity and Pity towards one another.

All which together must needs be a mighty means of securing both the Doctrine and Practice of Religion, and of promoting all the ends of it.

When a Man hath not only the comfort of his private Conscience whensoever he doth bravely, but the publick Acclamations of the whole Church; and contrariwise, when he doth any thing basely and viciously, he is not only under the secret lashes of his own guilty Mind, but exposed to shame and reproach, and incurs the Censure of the whole Society. When a Man cannot be fantastical and affect Novelty, but such an honourable Body is concerned for his danger, and obliged to use their Endeavours to reclaim him, and if that be unsuccessful, are put to make a publick Lamentation for him: nor, on the other side, can any Man acquit himself as a worthy Champion for the Truth, and miss of a Lawrel in this World, since he shall be sure to have the Gratulations and honourable Esteem of such a Society. Now if there were no such thing as a Church constituted, there would be very few Men found that would take care of those things, and especially few that would venture upon the ingrateful
Office

Office of Reproving: or if perhaps some Persons might be found who had zeal enough to undertake it, yet as in that case it would not easily appear to be their duty; so neither could it be performed with that Authority and Success as now it may.

But then for the more ordinary Offices of Charity, such as pitying and comforting the Weak, succouring the Oppressed, and relieving the necessitous; these would not only be coldly performed, but indeed would be thought to be no duties at all, if there was no such thing as a Church whereby Men are incorporated together. For besides that we find very little of this thought of or practised amongst those that are not of this Society; we may also generally take an Estimate of Mens Affection to the Church of Christ, by their Charity to the Members of it. But if Men believe there is such a Society as a Church instituted, and they consider themselves as Members of it, then even Self-love (which makes others uncharitable) renders these highly charitable, because they then look upon others as Members of the same Body with themselves.

Fifthly and Lastly, The Establishment of the Society of a Church, and thereby a publick Worship, is an Expedient of unpeakable comfort and encouragement to all humble and modest persons, and especially to such as are truly contrite and broken-hearted, in the addressing their Prayers to Almighty God, animating them against their sense of the Guilt of their Sins, the unworthiness of their Persons, the imperfection of their Prayers, and affording them

many Arguments of hope for success beyond what they could expect from their private Devotions.

Whilst they consider, in the first place, that they are now in God's House, or *Court of Requests*, where he uses to give Audience to poor Suppliants.

Again, Secondly, That their Desires are put up by the hands of God's own Minister whom he hath appointed to present Petitions to himself.

Thirdly, That their Prayers are not offered up singly and alone, but in conjunction with the Devotions of so many other more holy Persons as the whole Church consists of, so that they may hope to speed the better for such Company, and especially by the united Efficacy of so many ardent Affections.

And, Lastly, The Faith and Hope of such Men is wonderfully strengthened by the Contemplation of the great Propitiation for Sin, made by our Saviour, and represented to their Eyes on the Lord's Table in the Holy Communion. All these things were mightily esteemed by the Christians of old, and certainly are great Advantages.

And thus I have now laid before you the peculiar Laws of the Gospel, and shewed you also the admirable Encouragements, and the singular Helps and Assistances God hath afforded us towards the observance of those Laws, and the Prosecution of that Religion. Is there any thing more I can serve you in?

Bioph. Yes, I plainly see there is a great deal more I may learn of you; but God be thanked,
and

and I heartily thank you for what I have learned hitherto.

Sebast. You remember I have opened to you the Grounds and Reason of Religion in general, and thence led you to the Christian Religion in particular, and by the line of that I have now brought you to the Church, and there I leave you in good hands, and I pray God be with you.

Bioph. You have brought me to see the folly of my own Prejudices, which I again thank God and you for: I am convinced of the Reality and Necessity of some Religion or other, and of the Excellency of the Christian Religion above all that ever I heard of, or what I could have imagined; and now I intend in earnest to bethink my self how to live accordingly.

Sebast. Remember withal, to keep close to the Church, and be constant and diligent in attendance upon the Publick Worship of God there, that will be a means both to keep up that good zeal which you are now under, and to preserve it from running out into wild Extravagancies.

Bioph. I will, *Sebastian*, by God's Grace, I will; and in that course hope to come to Heaven at last.

Phil. What, *Biophilus*, Will you turn Knight Errant now?

Bioph. You neither can nor will, I know, *Philander*, so much upbraid me with my former Folly, as my own Heart will do it for me; but I will endeavour to make amends for that by my future diligence.

Phil. Ah! God forbid, *Biophilus*, that I, who am sensible of my own many Sins, should upbraid

upbraid your Errors. I embrace you with all my heart, I heartily welcome you into the way of Heaven, there I am sure the Angels rejoice at this blessed Change, and nothing less than Devils can repine at it; and they must be a sort of desperate Wretches amongst Men that can upbraid you for what is past.

Sebast. Well, good night to you both, Gentlemen; I doubt it grows late.

Phil. I hope, good *Sebastian*, you are not weary of well-doing; I was unwilling to interrupt you and *Biophilus* in your Discourse hitherto, both because it exceedingly confirmed and improved me in what (I thank God) I did believe already, and especially because I did not doubt of a good issue of it upon my neighbour; but I have all this while waited for an opportunity to ask your Advice in a case or two of very great Concernment; and now I intreat you allow me the liberty to do it.

Sebast. I pray God my Power be answerable to my Will to serve you: What is the matter, *Philander*?

Phil. There are these two things I would crave your direction in:

First, By what means a Man may maintain his ground, and keep stable and steadfast in Religion in distracted times?

And, Secondly, What course he should take to maintain an even temper and constant cheerfulness of Spirit under all the Accidents of the present Life?

Sebast. Oh! *Philander*, there you have tied me by the Leg; I cannot stir a foot from you: those two Enquiries are both so necessary at all times,

times, and so peculiarly seasonable at this time, that I should neglect my self as well as you, if I should not be willing to consider of them with you; and it's pity we have not time more fully to treat of them.

But I pray, in the first place, let me know what you mean by Stability in Religion? Would

Of Stability in Religion.

you have a Man be peremptory in his Judgment, and unmovable from his first Persuasions whatever they were? Do you think it unlawful or dishonourable for a Man ever to change his Opinion in Religion? This, methinks, is no better than a Resolution, never to be wiser than a Man is at present; nay, to be always a Child, and never to outgrow his youthful Prejudices and Follies: you know it is the hard Fortune of some Men to have been ill educated, and to have had bad Principles instilled into them in their injudicious years, and it cannot be imputed to such Men as a vicious Levity or Inconstancy, but a very vertuous and commendable thing, upon maturer Judgment to discard such old Wives Fables or juvenile Fancies.

What is meant by Stability and Constancy in Religion.

Phil. No, *Sebastian*, I do not think the Minds of Men should be after the manner of uninhabited Lands, and become *primi occupantis*; nor do I call Perseverance in an Error Stability, but Stubbornness and Obstinacy. The meaning of my first Question therefore is only how a Man shall be enabled to stand firm and tight to the Truth of Christian Religion, that whereof his Judgment is convinced by good Reason, and
whereof

whereof he hath had good Proof and Experience; so that he shall neither be always trying and seeking, and disputing and doubting on the one hand, nor on the other, in danger to be Hector'd out of his Conscience by any terrour, nor wheedled and complemented out of it by flattery and insinuation, that no Example of great Men, or of the Multitude, may bias him, nor Sophistry of cunning Men cheat him of his Religion, no Atheistical Person droll or railly him out of it, nor Scurrility make him ashamed of it.

Sebast. I did not doubt but that was your Meaning, and (as I said before) that is a very weighty and important Question, both in respect of the many Temptations that may at some times especially put a Man's Constancy hard to it; and in respect also of the mischief of yielding or being baffled in that particular.

The Temptations and Dangers of this kind (as you have well intimated) are many: for a Man may be either undermined by Policy, or battered by plain force; he may be wheedled by Complements, or born down by Authority; imposed upon by Rhetorical Flourishes, or circumvented by Sophistry; or some Man may indulge his Curiosity to try all things, who hath neither the Judgment to discern, nor the Courage to hold fast that which is best.

*The mischiefs of
Levity and Incon-
stancy in Religion.*

And on the other side, the mischief of yielding in this case, or of foregoing the Truth (by what means soever it be) is very great. For doubtless Divine Truth, especially that of the Gospel, is a very great *depositum*, a mighty Trust which God hath reposed in

in us, and he that is false to it, and either softly or fillily delivers it up, is a Traitor both against God, and his own Soul.

He sins against God, ungratefully undervaluing so great a Blessing as the knowledge of true Religion, and playing fast and loose with it, as if the Gospel was fit only to serve a turn.

And he intolerably wrongs and cheats himself, abandoning the only effectual Principles of true Piety, and the means of improving himself to a capacity of eternal Happiness. For it is a mighty mistake (as I have noted before) for a Man to think that all Religions are alike, or that so a Man be true to any Principles, the pursuit of them will bring him to Heaven.

It is true, sometimes Men are better than their Opinions, as we see amongst the several sorts of deluded Sectaries: there are some which we cannot but in charity judge to be good Men, but then it must be when the mistake is only in some Notion or inconsiderable Tenets, and when otherwise they are right for the main, but where the error is fundamental, or in the substantial part of Religion, then the very Sinews of Piety are cut, and a Man's zeal in such a case will be wild and fruitless. For as in Nature, it is impossible for Water to rise higher than its Source or Fountain; so it seems to be (at least next to) impossible in morality, that a Man should be better than his Principles. Therefore saith our Saviour, *Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, &c.* Matth. 12. 33. And again, *if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?*

darkness? Matth. 6. 23. As if he had said, "It is true, a Man may *with-hold the truth in un-righteousness*, and be worse in his Life than the Principles of his Mind and Conscience did require; but if a Man's Principles themselves be nought, and if he have embraced a bad Religion, what good can be expected from him? Therefore, I say, a Man horribly cheats his own Soul, who upon any pretence, or under any Temptation whatsoever, forsakes or blanches the true Principles of Religion.

Nay farther, I think it worth the observing that the very unsettledness of a Man's Mind, if it be but in mere Opinion, and although he should all the while keep close to the great Principles of Religion, is a great impediment to the growth of Piety and Vertue. For as we see a Tree, by being often removed (although it should be still to a better Soil) is hindred both in its growth and fruitfulness; so we find by experience, that those who are the most busie disputers, and who most affect Novelty and change of Opinions, do little more than make a noise or a shew in the World, but are so far from improvement in their Lives and Tempers, that contrariwise they grow apparently more passionate, proud, ambitious, censorious and schismatical.

But to be sure, he that is facile, and unresolved in his Principles, and of a ductile Conscience, shall never be able to do any honour to his Religion or to himself.

As for his Religion: Who shall persuade me to be of his Principles, whom I perceive to be unresolved of them himself?

And for the esteem of his Person that is mutable, this will be his fate, That he shall be scorned as a Renegado by those very Men that at the same time glory in having made him a Profelyte. All which things (and a great many more, which I need not mention to you) do effectually recommend Stability and Constancy in Religion.

Phil. I am well aware of the truth of what you say, and thereupon I do the more earnestly intreat you to give me your Advice in the case, that I may continue stanch and stable against all the Assailants of my Religion, and so avoid all the mischiefs you have given me warning of, as consequent of Levity and Changing.

Sebast. It is not so difficult to give advice in this case (and that such as would effectually do the business too) as it is hard to find Men that ask for it in earnest and with intention to follow it: for some, as I told you before, think it a very indifferent thing what Religion they are of, so they have any thing that is called by that name, at least if it be Christian, and they can see the Appearance of a Church, and the Ceremonies and Appendages of Religion amongst them.

And some are so silly as to think there is no change made if they have but the old Names of things left them; like the *Romans* in their degenerate times, that suffered themselves to be tamely wheedled out of their ancient Liberty, so long as the name of a Commonwealth, and a few other terms of Art were retained. Such Men will take Brass-money for good Pay, if they see but the usual Face and Inscription up-

on it, and you may safely steal away their Goose if you stick but down a Feather in the room of it. Some are so childishly fond of Pomp and Ceremony, that if there appear more of that than ordinary, they will believe Religion to be only improved and not changed.

Some again have such a sickly longing after Novelty, that they will be always making Experiments though it be at the hazard of their own Souls, and some love their Religion well enough if it cost them nothing : but they will run no hazards for it. And in fine, there are others that think it a wise thing to sacrifice a Conscience to gain a potent Friend, and a goodly purchase to buy the present World with the loss of that which is to come.

But I am satisfied of the sincerity of your Temper, and therefore in answer to your Demand, I recommend to you these three or four things.

*Directions for the
keeping men stable
in the true Religion.*

1. In the first place, you know that your Religion, I mean that which you have been trained up in by the Church of *England*, and which you have always professed, is a Scriptural Religion, *i. e.* such an one as hath not merely prescribed for it self by custom (though it be certainly elder than those that do so) nor derived it self from that headless Monster, unaccountable Tradition, no nor yet from the Subtilty of Humane Philosophy (though it have more reason to plead for it self than any other) but hath taken its rise from Holy Scripture and Divine Revelation, and consequently as it is to be proved, so it is to be disproved

disproved thence, or nothing can be said to the purpose against it.

Therefore my first Advice

is, That you study the Holy Scripture diligently, and

1. *Keep close to the Holy Scriptures.*

stick close to that; that, as St. Paul hath assured us, *is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works,* 2 Tim.

3. 16. and from thence a Man may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, 1 Pet.

3. 15. *i. e.* make a sufficient Apology for, and Defence of his Religion.

I do not mean hereby, either altogether to evacuate the Authority of laudable Custom in some certain cases; or much less, that either Tradition or Humane Learning was to be slighted; nor least of all, that the Scripture was so far a measure of our practice, as that every thing became unlawful and not to be admitted in practice, which is not to be proved by express Scripture.

For God supposed us to be Men of understanding when he gave us Divine Revelation, and thought fit to leave some Circumstances of things to be defined by Humane Prudence.

But this I think is certain, that if we pretend our Religion to be derived from Scripture, we must then admit nothing which is contrary to that Rule, no nor account any thing to be essential to it which that hath not provided for.

For as it could not stand with the Divine Wisdom to abound in superfluities, or to give
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express directions for what was sufficiently provided for before; so neither could it consist with his Goodness to provide a Rule which was defective in Necessaries.

And this I think (by the way) was the prime excellency of the Reformation, that (although some things perhaps might be erroneous, and many things imperfect in it) yet it revived the true Canon of Christian Religion, the Holy Scripture, and so put into Mens hands an easie and certain Rule to go by, for besides other advantages of this Rule, it sets us upon even ground with the most cunning Adversaries, and forces them to play upon the square with us. Forasmuch as this (as to the main lines of it) is fitted for all Capacities, that every Man may see the Grounds of his Religion,

As for Example, if any Man should persuade me to worship an Idol, or to worship the True God by and under an Image, let such a Man use all the Art and Sophistry he can, he will never be able to impose upon him that studies and sticks to the Holy Scriptures.

Or if another should go about to persuade me there was an easier and shorter way to Heaven than by an Holy Life, and that there might be either Distinctions or Dispensations, or some way or other of Commutation found out which would excuse me that trouble and do my business as well: I can never be cheated into such a persuasion whilst I consult the Holy Scripture, which is as plain and as full as can be desired in both those cases: Therefore, as I said; stick close to the Holy Scripture, as you desire to hold your Religion,

2. But if it shall happen that either any thing in the Scripture should seem so obscure, or that the Sophistry of cunning Men should cast such a mist before us that we are not able to determine our selves what to do. Then, in the second place we are to resort to our Spiritual Guides, which God hath set over us, who have baptized us into, and trained us up in our Religion to help us out.

2. *Make use of our
Spiritual Guides.*

This is also a means of Stability of Gods own appointing: for the Apostle hath told us that God hath erected those Orders of Men in his Church that we should *not be as Children to s'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine, and by the cunning craftiness of Men who lie in wait to deceive*, Ephes. 4. 14. And these having made it their whole business and study to be fit for their Office, and to be acquainted with the *Depths of Satan*, as well as the Mystery of Christianity; I mean, to be able to detect the Frauds and Sophistry of Deceivers, as well as to understand and explicate the Holy Scripture, and the deep Points of Religion, and being also ordinarily to be presumed, Men of Prudence and Experience, it must needs be very fit that these should be consulted and hearkned to with reverence, especially by those that have been destitute of the aforesaid Advantages and it is very unreasonable that any Man should make so great a Change as that of his Religion is, without the best advice and most mature Deliberation of this kind.

And this is especially to be heeded in this present Age when such crafty Gamblers are

abroad that use such Legerdemain, and to cogg the Die (as the Apostle's Phrase imports in the fore-mentioned place) when, I say, there is *such Fox-like Craft, and such Methods of Deceit* to gain Profelytes, that the neglect of this Caution seems to be the principal defect and danger of the Members of this Church. The Men of other persuasions, follow their Guides with an implicit Faith and a blind Obedience, and are scarce permitted the use of their reason, or to chuse for themselves even in the most indifferent things. And if we will not use so much Deference to our Pastors as to think they may see farther than we in controverted Cases, we shall be in danger to hold our Religion no longer than till we shall be briskly assaulted.

3. *Contempt of the World is necessary to Stability in Religion.*

3. He that would be stable in his Religion, must learn to contemn the present World, without which both the former advices will be utterly insignificant for his security against Apostasie. If a Man have the present World in admiration, it will dazle his Eyes, blind his Judgment, prejudice his Mind, bribe his Affections, and debauch his Conscience; for it cannot be but Religion and the things of another World must be cheap with him that over-values the present.

Judas, we know, sold our Saviour at the vile rate of thirty pieces of Silver; but Preferment and Honour, Wealth and Glory, are so great motives, that the Devil had the Confidence to hope to prevail upon our Saviour himself to fall down and worship him, when he *showed him the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory*

Glory of them, and offered them to him at that price.

To swim in Pleasure, flow with Wealth, and be at the top of the World in Glory, what will not this do with unmortified Hearts? Such Men in such a case will (it may be) at first strain Curtesie with Conscience, and find out a thousand Shifts and Distinctions to excuse themselves; but rather than fail (and if that will not do) they will cut the knot they cannot untie, and rudely break with Conscience, rather than withstand so great allurements.

Therefore, *Philander*, if you and I would stick fast to our Principles, we must sit somewhat loose to the World, we must entertain no great opinion concerning Wealth and Honour, but be content with little things for the present, and comfort our selves with the Expectation of great in another World. We must consider with our selves how vain and empty those things are, even in this Life, and whilst they are enjoy'd, and especially how perfectly they vanish, and are of no avail at all at the Day of Judgment: *We must look at the things which are not seen, and are Eternal, the crown of Life*, 2 Cor. 4. ult. (I mean) which God hath prepared for all *those that are faithful to the death*, Rev. 2. 10. Then shall we be stable as the centre of the Earth, unchangeable as the Heavens, brave and courageous, so as to scorn allurements, contemn danger, and be true to our real Interest, our Conscience, our God, and our Religion.

4. *Fervent and
constant Prayer to
God,*

4. If especially to all these, in the last place, we joyn fervent and constant Prayer to God: for we are not to trust to our selves, but commend to him the fixing our Minds and establishing our Hearts; he made them and knows them, and he only can confirm and strengthen them against all our own folly and levity, and against all the temptations of the Devil; he can provide that we shall not *be led into temptation*, or however, *that no temptation shall overtake us but what we shall be able to bear*; he can deliver us from all the snares that shall be laid for us, and help us to elude all Sophistry; and, in a word, can upon Emergency, and in the very nick of time, bestow *upon us such a spirit and wisdom as none of our adversaries shall be able to withstand*, Luk. 21. 15.

These, *Philander*, are the most effectual things I can think of for the present, in answer to your first Question,

Phil. I thank you heartily, *Sebastian*, for the great satisfaction you have given me, and I shall make it both my own care, and the Matter of my Prayer to God, that neither the levity of my own Mind, nor the importunity of others, shall tempt me from the good old way of the Church of *England*; and that neither any effort of Wit or Power, the blandishments of Prosperity, nor the storms of Adversity, shall stagger my Resolution.

And now, because I would not be troublesome to you too long, be pleased, as briefly as the Case will bear, to resolve me also in my second inquiry, namely, By what means I may maintain

maintain a constant chearfulness of Spirit in the course of Christianity. You made it evident at the beginning of this present Conference, that there is such a thing attainable, and you will not wonder that I am inquisitive after so inestimable a good: And the rather because (it is in vain to be ashamed to tell you what you cannot but have observed your self in me) for my own part, though I am sometimes very comfortable, and now and then as full of joy as my Heart can hold, yet at other times (whether it be occasioned by any error of my Life, or by the effect of my Constitution of Body, or the weakness of my Mind I cannot tell) it is quite otherwise with me, and my Spirits sink as low as they were high before. Now therefore give me your advice how I may maintain an even temper of chearfulness, so that I may neither seem to be Infidel nor Enthusiast, neither disparage the Power of Religion by meanness of Spirit, nor rendring it suspected to be merely the acting of a part by my over-doing and pretending to too high flights of Joy.

Inquiry by what means a Man may maintain an even temper of spiritual comfort.

Sebast. This second inquiry of yours, *Philander*, is no less useful than the former, for (as you have well intimated) not only the happiness of a Man's own Life depends upon it, but the Reputation of Religion it self is very much concerned in the temper of Spirit, which he expresses under it. For what stranger to Religion would not be afraid of it, that observes the melancholy complaints, the perpetual Scruples, the doleful Sighs and dismal

Countenances of some that pretend to it? And on the other hand; What sober Man would not take it to be an Enthusiastick Frenzy, when he observes Men to be rapt up into the third Heaven (at least in their own conceit) but can give no rational account of it? And again; what wise Man shall observe the uncertainty of Mens temper in this respect, and not suspect whether that can have any solid Foundation it self whose Effects are so volatile and inconstant.

This being the consequence of the case, it is very fit it should be provided for accordingly. Now though what I have said already, whilst I was answering *Biophilus's* Objections against the comfortableness of Religion, will in a good measure come up to this point, especially if you lay all those things together which were occasionally scattered through that dispute; yet for your satisfaction, as well as for the importance of the matter, I will not grudge the pains to resume that subject, and give you my thoughts more fully and directly now, which before I did only briefly and by the by.

Now in order to the determining of the method and means of settled peace and an even temper of Spiritual Comfort, it is necessary that we discover the several causes of the Interpreration thereof, and when we have found them, if we can apply proper and peculiar Remedies to each of them, then we shall do your business.

As for the former, *viz.* the causes of the Unevenness of a Christian's Spirit, or the Interruptions of his Spiritual Comfort, they are easily found out, and I do not doubt but they may be reckoned to be these five following:

Namely,

Namely, either, 1. Unevenness and Irregularity of Life. Or,

2. Undue Apprehensions of God. Or,

3. Mistake of the terms of the Gospel. Or,

4. Sad Accidents externaly. Or,

5. Melancholy of Body.

1. In the first place, I account the Irregularity of Mens Lives to be a very common and the most ordinary cause of the Unevenness of their Comfort.

A constant and even course of Piety is the first and principal means of a constant and even temper of heart.

All vertuous Actions have naturally Peace and tranquillity belonging to them; for, besides the pleasant Air of good Reputation that attends them, and that a Man who hath the least value for applause that can be, is, notwithstanding, insensibly made more chearful by it, it is a great deal more to have a Man's own Conscience approve him, and especially when he considers that he doth what God is well pleased with, and that which he will not fail one way or other to give Testimony to, and shew his Approbation of.

On the contrary, all vicious Actions are naturally uncomfortable; for besides the infamy that attends them, they have guilt inseparably adheres to them; and God's displeasure intailed upon them. For as he can never either hate Vertue or love Vice without a flat Contradiction to his own Nature; so neither can he, or will he frown upon the one, or shine upon the other.

Now therefore if a Man be habitually vicious, he must needs be habitually sad and miserable
(with-

(without that more miserable and sordid Refuge, Drunkenness, that filthy Dose for the Gripes of Conscience.) And if a Man be habitually Good and Holy, and maintains a constant course of Piety and Vertuous Actions, he will be habitually comfortable, and under a constant ray of light and glory. But if a Man be up and down in his life, sometimes good and sometimes bad, or at least sometimes brave and generous, and at other times flat and careless, he cannot expect that his comforts should be more constant than he himself is: for the effects must follow the condition of their causes.

In this case therefore the Disease leads to the Remedy, he that would maintain an even temper of Peace in his Conscience, must be sure to maintain an even course of Vertue and Piety in his Life. For it is not only impossible to secure the former without the latter, but it is ridiculous to pretend to it; nay farther, if it should happen that any Man found his Heart chearful extraordinarily upon other terms, he would have just cause to suspect a delusion of the Devil.

God is constantly of the same Mind, Religion and the terms of happiness are constant and settled, therefore there can be no way to constant Comfort in the one, or Hopes in the other, but by being constant to our selves and to our duty; nor can there be any cause of uncertainty, but the unsettledness of our own Hearts. But if a Man live so, as that it become matter of difficult dispute, whether he be a good Man or no, it must needs be much more so, whether he shall go to Heaven or no, and then

then I think it is out of dispute, whether such a Man can be comfortable or not. Let the Man therefore that aims at a settled Peace, be sure to be constant and thorough paced in his duty, that it become not only a bias upon him, but the very method and habit of his Life; and let foolish People, if they will, call this formality and a road of Religion, for if it be a road, it is certainly the narrow one that leads to Life; for never is Religion as it should be, till it become thus natural and habitual. Yet lest any Man should by reason of the easiness of this state, when it is arrived at, interpret it to be but formality, let him withal embrace all opportunities of doing not only strictly necessary duties, but brave and generous actions, that so he may demonstrate zeal as well as constancy, and an ardency of affection to God and Goodness; and he that takes this course, shall effectually secure himself against the first cause of uncomfortableness.

2. The second cause of spiritual dejection I reckoned to be undone Apprehensions of God, and this generally goes

*Right Notions of
God is the next step
to settled Peace.*

a great way in the disquiets and disorders of most well-meaning but weak People; for whereas, if things be rightly considered, the very first Notion of a God is an everlasting spring of hope, and the right understanding of his Goodness is the great sweetner of a Man's Spirits, and that which principally disposes him to cheerfulness, it is common with weak or deluded People either to receive such Impressions from others, or Ignorantly to frame such an Image

of

of God in their own Minds as they must eternally hate, but cannot possibly love. And if the Thoughts of God be unpleasant to them, it must needs follow that all the duties of Religion must go on heavily, and when they have done, their hopes must be flat, and all about them looks melancholy.

The principal thing I aim at in this place, is when Men have such a Notion of God as renders his Actions as necessary as his Nature; and because (as I have shewed to *Biophilus*) he was from Eternity, and could not but be, therefore they conceit he cannot but do whatsoever is done as necessarily as he exists; and so unawares they set a surly and rigid Fate over themselves instead of a wise and good God. For in pursuance of this Notion they conclude he must be just to extremity, and that he is bound to vindicate himself rigorously, so that he cannot abate or remit of his own right, but must exact the utmost Farthing; and on the other side, they fantasie that he cannot but do all the good he doth, and must upon necessity of nature make all the Expressions of kindness that are possible.

The former of these is very horrible; for (though in one respect it renders God less than a Man, for we both can (and ought in many cases to) recede from our own right, yet upon the whole) it must needs be an hard Chapter, nay, a most killing Consideration to such imperfect and guilty Creatures as we are, to think our selves under a God that cannot pardon properly; that can pass no Act of Grace, but must rigidly exact his Right one way or other:
for

for then what can my Prayers, and Tears, and Repentance, and even Reformation it self signifie? And though there be a Mediator and a Satisfaction spoken of in the Gospel, yet the apprehension of such a supream Being is able to render even that Remedy suspicious, or however to make a Man's Heart ake and tremble all the days of his Life; but to be sure he can take no delight in God, whatever hopes he may have in a Saviour.

And then, on the other side, the apprehension of the necessity of the Acts of Divine Goodness renders him as contemptible as the former made him terrible. For who can think himself bound to love and thank him for that which he could not chuse but do? And besides, this renders all Prayers and Addresses to such a God as fruitless as the other. For what need I pray to him that cannot do otherwise than he doth?

But the mistake all this while lies here; neither of these sorts of Men consider that God is a free Agent, and consequently though he cannot chuse but be just and righteous in all his dealings, yet he is bound by nothing but his own good pleasure to exercise such, or such instances of Justice. He may punish or he may pardon upon what terms he pleases, and so far as he pleases; *He hath Mercy because he will have Mercy, and because Mercy pleases him*: And so for his Goodness, though he is infinitely full and perfect, and consequently delights to communicate himself to his Creatures, yet all the Instances and Expressions of it are free and voluntary; he is not bound to do such things
merely

merely because they are good in the general, but accordingly as his own Wisdom directs him, and as they shall serve the Ends of that in particular. And then every good Man that lives under these Apprehensions may be generously comfortable, and neither be tempted to despise God as a soft and good natur'd Being, on the one side, nor to be horribly afraid of him, and hate him on the other.

Right Apprehension of the temper and demand of the Gospel is another means of settled Peace.

3. Another cause of Uncomfortableness is, when Men do not rightly understand the terms of the Gospel, but either mistake the Opinions and Traditions of Men for the Definitions of God, or at least confound what God designs to bring us up to by the Gospel as a State of Perfection, with what he strictly requires and insists upon as the Conditions of Salvation. Hence it comes to pass that they are not able to make any good Judgment of their own Estate, but are either apt to comply with the flatteries of their own Hearts, and pronounce comfort to themselves upon too loose terms; or on the other side, to yield to their own Melancholy by too severe and rigid a Censure of themselves; or lastly, will waver between both, according as they meet with a New Book, a New Saying, or an Unusual Accident, and so be by fits sad or cheerful as it happens.

Now for this, it is to be considered, that though the Gospel some times seems to be very strict and severe, or at least very accurate in its Prescriptions, which it doth partly, for the Honour

Honour and Perfection of that Religion, partly that by means to screw us up to as high a Pitch as possible; for it is certain if our Copy or Rule should be low and mean, our endeavours should be slackened, and our performances would fall so very short that we should not be tolerable Christians: Again, on the other side, though the same Gospel at other times speaks very condescendingly and seems to make so great allowances to humane Infirmary, as if it was a very easie matter to be saved; and this it doth to encourage especially Men of melancholy and dejected Tempers, and to bear them up against the sad reflections they are apt to make either upon their former Sins, or their daily Infirmities.

Yet all this while God is of one Mind, and the New Testament hath a determinate Sense:

Namely, That whatsoever shall give evidence of a Man's Sincerity, *i. e.* that he hath a principle of Divine Life in him, and a true Love of God and Goodness, this shall be sufficient to his Salvation; and as nothing less than this shall be accepted, so nothing more is indispensibly required.

For the Salvation or Damnation of Men depends not upon Punctilio's or nice Points of Dispute, as if God had a Mind by the means of a subtil Interpretation to save and damn Men arbitrarily, therefore he lays no stress upon their being, or not being, of such an Opinion, nor takes the advantage of a Ceremony under or over; for the Apostle hath told us, *That the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost,*

Ghost, Rom. 14. 17. and again, *That neither Circumcision availeth any thing nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*, Gal. 6. 15.

Nay, it is true also that God decides not Mens final Estate (one way or other) merely upon the account of such Duties performed, or such Sins committed: but that which he principally looks at in this case is an ingenuous or dis-ingenuous temper towards himself, and a capacity or fitness for the state of Heaven on the one side, and a temper and disposition fit for Hell and the Devil on the other.

That (I say) which God expressly requires as the Condition of Salvation, is an habit and temper of Obedience, and an ingenuous frame of Heart towards himself and his Laws. And that this is not to be estimated Arithmetically, or by tale of such a number of Performances, but rather Geometrically, in proportion to the heartiness and sincerity of the Man, and with respect to the circumstances he stands in; that is, as well making allowance for his temptations, afflictions, ignorances, infirmities and surprisals, as raising the reckoning in consideration of extraordinary light, knowledge, opportunities, encouragements and advantages whatsoever. Accordingly we find the Apostle to make a supposition, that a Man *may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his Body to be burnt also, and yet want charity and the love of God*, 1 Cor. 13. 3. and yet our Saviour on the other hand tells us, that, *whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only to a Disciple, shall not lose his reward*, Mat. 10. 42.

So that (as I said) sincerity is the only thing in Question, especially, as to the business of a constant and even temper of Spiritual Peace. Now that is easie to be decided, and a Man needs not to run himself into nice Disputes, endless Scruples and Perplexities about it; for whosoever endeavours to live well according to the Gospel, will easily be sensible of his own sincerity. For as it is no hard Matter for a Man to know concerning himself, whether he hath carried himself faithfully towards his Friend, or with a filial reverence towards his Father, and he may as easily tell whether he hath dealt treacherously with the one, or been stubborn, and careless of offending the other; and accordingly (if they be wise and worthy Persons he hath to deal with) he may assure himself of the love of the former and of the paternal affection of the latter, notwithstanding that possibly he may be conscious to himself to have done some things unadvisedly, and to have failed in circumstances towards them both: So I see no reason to doubt but that upon the same terms a Man may be able to witness to himself his own integrity and simplicity towards God his truest Friend and most affectionate Father, and thereupon look chearfully up to him as such, and walk comfortably before him, especially having so good assurance, (as I shewed before) that he is far from being a captious Deity.

4. Again, there is a Fourth very common occasion of uncomfortableness, namely, the grievance of external Accidents and Calami-

Faith in God against all accidents and out-
ties,

M

ward Affections another means of constant Peace and Comfort.

ties, which may and do frequently befall the best Men, and which either by their sharpness discompose a Christian, or by the multitude and severity of them may tempt him to Question how he stands in the favour of God who permits such things to befall him, or at least by their often and yet uncertain Returns may make the Pulse of his Heart beat very unequally:

Against this there is no more proper Remedy than to rouse up our selves, and to act a generous Faith in God.

Considering, in the first place, that this is his usual method with those he loves best, to exercise them with Affliction, and that Affliction is so far from being a Token of his Hatred, that on the contrary, there is no more dangerous sign of God's having quite deserted and abandoned a Man, than for him to use no Chastisement towards him. *If ye receive not Chastisement, saith the Apostle, ye are Bastards, and not Sons.* And therefore we see the very Eternal Son of God when he came upon Earth and was in our Nature, was the most remarkable Instance of a *Man of Sorrows* that ever was in the World, insomuch that it is not easie to imagine what calamity can befall any Man which is not to be paralleled, if not exceeded in the Sufferings of our Saviour, and as if God had order'd it so on purpose to this end, that no Man might complain of his share, or especially despair and think himself forsaken of God because of his Adversities.

And

And then in the second place, assuring our selves, that as all Afflictions come from God, so they shall *certainly be made to work for good to all those that love him*, Rom. 8. 28. For unless we humour our selves, and indulge our Passion too much, we may discover that there is hardly any Affliction befalls, but what we may be bettered by, even for the present if we will; but there can be no doubt but God both can and will turn it to our Advantage in the issue and upshot of things: and therefore we have no reason to be too much dejected upon such an occasion.

But that which is to be the principal exercise of our Faith in such a case, and of most effectual Consideration, is, That God hath provided another World, and an estate of unmixed and uninterrupted joy there, when this short and troublesome life is ended. And if we fix our thoughts there (which we have great reason to do, considering the happiness is so unspeakably great, the certainty of it is so full, and the time so short for the accomplishment of it) we shall then count *all the sufferings of the present not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall then be revealed* Rom. 8. 18. and be far from fainting under the sharpest of Adversities, *whilst thus we look not at the things which are seen, and are but temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal*, 2 Cor. 4. 18.

5. But fifthly and lastly, the most general cause of the uncomfortableness of the Spirits of pious Men, and of the unevenness of their temper, is bodily melan-

*Advice in the
case of bodily melan-
choly.*

choly;

choly ; that black humour is apt to diffuse it self all over, so as to cloud the Judgment, and taint the eye of the Mind, that every thing shall look of its own colour, black and dismal, when this predominates, and at least while the Fit lasts, God is dreadful, his Laws are impossible, the guilt of sin is unpardonable, and even the most pitiable infirmities of Mankind (especially those which such a Man can observe in himself) are aggravated so as to bear the symptoms of Reprobation, and every Affliction is looked upon as a forerunner of the Vengeance of Hell Fire.

Melancholy in the Body becomes Jealousie in the Mind, and renders a Man always suspicious and uneasie, and to be continually searching for what he would be loth to find ; he is always trying and examining his own case to God-ward with that severity, as if he was desirous to discover flaws in his hopes and evidences of Salvation ; one while he is a little revived, and sees no reason to doubt his own Estate, but by and by he revokes the most deliberate conclusions of his own Conscience, and then again falls into the other extreme, and is altogether in the altitudes, but always uneven and unsettled.

Now for remedy of this, it is more than half way of the cure to understand the Disease, and yet that is no more than to be aware that melancholy is both cause and effect, and that that alone is able to act all this Tragedy without any other cause of sadness and disquiet, than merely the diffidence and mistrust of a Man's own temper. And that betrays it self
notoriously

notoriously in this, that such a Man can assign no reason of his trouble, but only he is troubled, and he is again troubled that he is so. Now if a Man could give any such account of his uncomfortable fears as were sufficient to satisfy any Man besides himself, then it would be reasonable not to charge them upon melancholy, but upon those just causes; but if no such causes be assignable, then it is manifestly temper that is in fault without guilt or danger; and this one thing considered is able to relieve a Man out of his perplexity, and his Mind may arrive at some tolerable measure of chearfulness, even in the midst of this bodily infirmity.

But if the understanding of such a Man be too weak, or the Disease of melancholy be too strong upon him to be cured this way; then the next thing to be done (after the use of Physick for the body) is to resort to some able and experienced Physician of Souls, and sincerely to lay open the state of his Conscience to him: and having so done, to rest upon the judgment of that other person, seeing he is not able to judge for himself, or not willing to rely upon his own judgment. And this is not only a way of present relief, but very safe and reasonable, and can have no such thing as an implicit faith imputed to it. For so long as the perplexed person can give any reason of his doubts and fears, so long the spiritual Guide is bound to give satisfaction to his reason, and to answer the just causes of his trouble; but when that is done, and the poor Man is perplexed without cause, it is apparent there is nothing but melancholy in the case, and then nothing can be more fit and
prope

proper than that the weak should lean upon the strong, and this poor distressed Creature should support himself by the Authority of God's Minister, who must be supposed to be able to judge in such a case, and cannot be suspected to be partial, because he hath no interest to serve by so doing.

And farther, the more effectually to relieve such a pitiable Person, it seems very necessary that after due Preparation thereunto, and all fit solemnity, the Man of God should proceed to a particular absolution of his Patient, not only to assure him of the good grounds he went upon in the judgment he gave of his estate before, but to raise his Spirits by the sacredness of the Action, and the hopes that God will ratifie in Heaven what is thus done on Earth by his Minister. This course is recommended by our Church as a *specifick* in such cases, and was of constant practice in the Primitive Church in such extremities, instead of that customary, general, and formal Auricular Confession, which (in ignorant and corrupt Ages) came in the room of it.

After all, I would earnestly advise such a Man (as we speak of) not to smother his thoughts in his own bosom, but by all means to let his Heart take Air; for there is hardly any serious Person so weak and injudicious, that a melancholy Man had not better consult with than himself; nay, many times the putting a question to a Post or Pillar, will help him to an answer better than revolving of it altogether in his Breast; but especially it is to be recommended to him, that he give not himself up to solitude and retirement, which thickens the
Blood,

Blood, and feeds the Disease, but that he frequent the Company and Conversation of good Men; their society will not only divert him, but their chearfulness will refresh him, and the very observing of their infirmities will tend to his comfort, as giving him cause to suspect his own austerity, and so inclining him to pass a more mild censure upon himself.

And thus, I think, *Philander*, I have satisfied your second inquiry, and have done it more largely than I intended, or than you expected. And now once again, Good night.

Phil. Good night heartily, good *Sebastian*.

FINIS.

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